Glimpses - Sindhu Civilization Revisited

Jawahar T. Bathija

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by

JAWAHAR T. BATHIJA

also

author of

"The Valley of Flowers"

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OUR THANKS

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JAWAHAR T. BATHIJA

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(Enlarged with additional stories and creative poetry)

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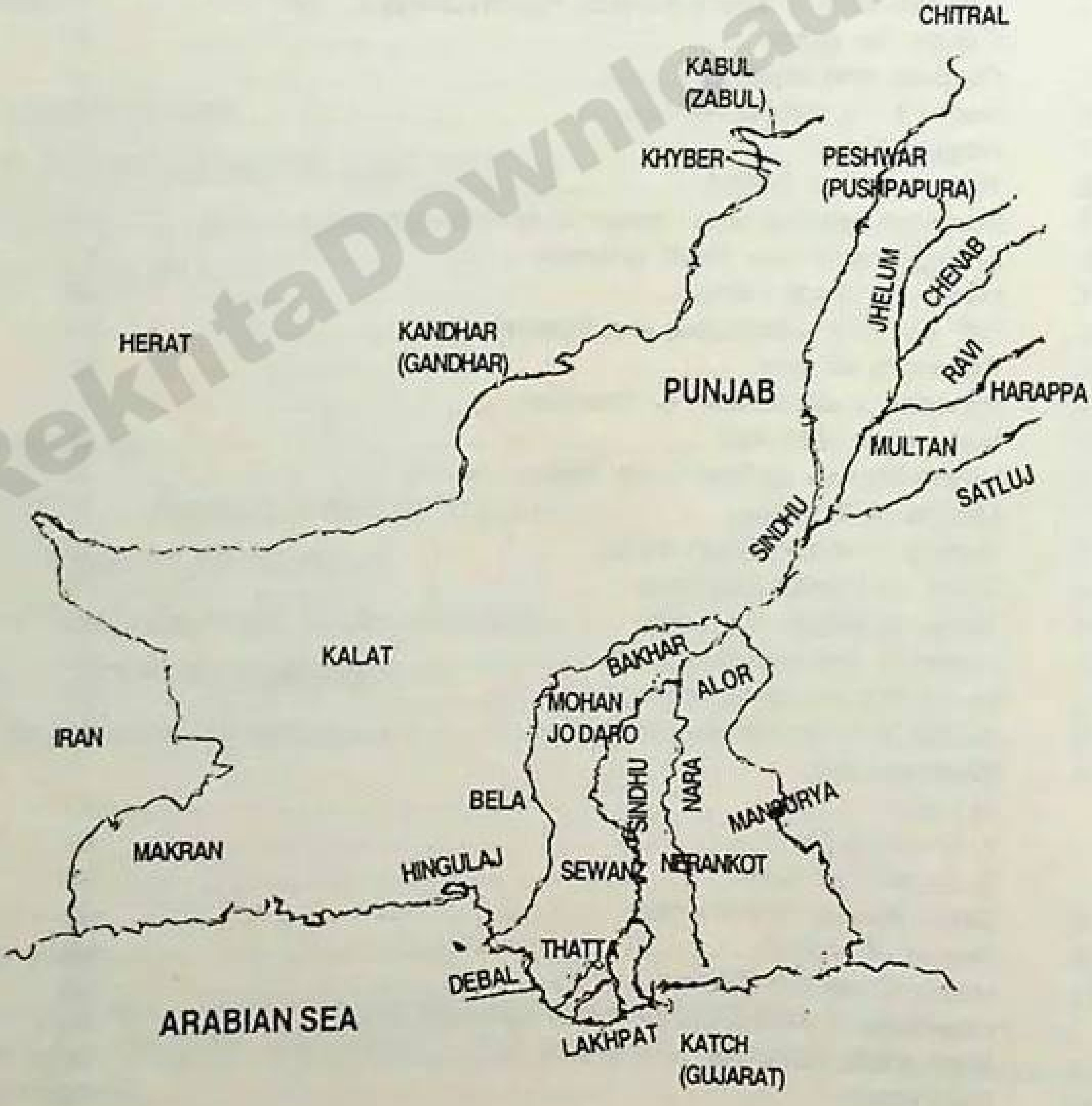
Greater Sindh During Raja Dahir Rule 711AD



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A Glance at Glimpses

The archaelogical discovery in 1922 in Upper Sindh (Dokri, Larkana) near Sindhu (Indus) river revealed well developed ancient civilization in the Sindh valley (2500 BC), hence called Indus valley civilization. The ruined underground city is presently called Mohen-jo-daro. The evidence of diverse materials, baths, jewellery, clothing, pictography - script and the style of living probably disclose the inhabitants being highly civilized and cultured. To this splendid civilization, there was further addition or assimiliation of foreign settlers of the Indo-Aryan race migrating from their cradle land in South Russia by about the 15th century BC.

It is presumptuous to infer that for learning any country's civilization we need to exavate its earth or read an impressive prose on it. The civilization is a continuing process for the countrymen who observe rectitude, practise hospitality, show tolerance and honour to holymen. It is, of course, entirely different matter that the evidence of Indus valley as revealed by the relics of Mohen-jo-daro was a feather in the cap to the Sindh province i.e. *piece de resistence*. The continuity of Indus valley civilization was possible only because its inheritors were acting in perfect harmony with the ancient values, pathos and time honoured traditions.

This is an age which will be remembered as an age in which human society dared to think of the spiritual and mundane welfare of whole human-race. It is the Indus civilization which is associated with the ancient sages of wisdom to whom esoteric knowledge concerning spiritual values (Vedas) was revealed in their meditation. So the Indus civilization is always in process of developing lofty and secular values. The poems, the piligrimages, the people of this civilized land speak volumes of its pristine glory. The gleanings of its glimpses are humbly presented.

In Other words :-

A bird's eye view of Sindhu Civilization

We have stories, as old as the great seas,
Breaking through the chest, flying out of the heart,
Of old great tellers who, once silenced the
Travellers from the North.

Ruins of Mohan Jo Daro

I am the Indus civilization

"I am a throbbing land of thousand years,
Where the epics were written by sages and seers
I am the sunlight that brightened the plains,
I am an open book read with the gains,
I have a company of long Sindhu river,
which tended the golden fields with love and care,
Whenever you wake up on chiming of bell,
In the morning, you will feel my holy smell,
Behold my skies with free birds in flight,
I am the pole star ever shines at night,
Don't stand by my relic nor you do cry,
I am here still, I did not die.

In praise of the Sindhu River

(original in Sindhi by Hyder Baksh Jatoi
Free translation by Jawahar Bathija)

You are the benefactor of our saintly Sindh,
You are the gem and jewel of Hind,
You are our pride in eyes of the world,
You are shelter of man and bird,
You are the crown of civilized man,
None of heavenly treasure compete it can,
You flow – queenly year after year,
Benignly you loved far and near,
You, pious as the Ganga of Kashi
You are the Yamuna of Krishna Kanhai
You are the Brahamputra, pilgrim's delight,
Or scenes of the Krishna, fantasy's flight,
You are the daughter of Mansarovar up-high,
Meandering thro' the valleys under canopy of sky,
Enter ye Kashmir that's heaven on the earth,
For man, beast, bird, is full of mirth,
Thousand winds salute you,as they blow,
You are the diamond that glints on snow,
Devoted are your sisters, Satluj and Ravi,
Follow you eagerly, Jehlum and Tavi,
Look at the Sindh valley : delighted as damsel,
Lamps on waves welcoming you, hail!
Honey, milk are endless, wherever I behold,
Obliged are the heirs though, be young or old.

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The Sindhu Rediscovered in India

All the students of geography know that the Sindhu oiginates in Tibet (now in China). The river harboured the fabled Harappan civilization. It is regarded one of the holiest rivers in the Vedas. It enters India near Leh (Ladakh), then it flows on to Pakistan.

Since there is a new love born in India for the Sindhu, the first Sindhu Darshan Utsav was celebrated in 1996 at Leh. If you have a sense of history, you will be overawed while standing at the Sindhu Ghat in Shey, six kilometres from Ladakh's capital, Leh.

There is a unique message of Indian unity at the festival, when the guardians of different faiths pay homage to this holy river. Waters of the Ganga, the Jamuna, the Kaveri and the Brahamputra are mingled with the Sindhu. There are Sindhi pandits, Buddist and Jain monks, Muslim Maulvis and Sikh preachers offer their respects. Sindhi tourists are often thrilled as they perform water worship *(Behrana)* as their forefathers did on the Sindhu river in Sindh.
Leh has high altitude problems. The plain visitors have to adjust to a rarified cold air (16000 ft above sea level). Leh reaffirms your belief in the survival of the fittest.
There is a sikh holy place called Gurdwara Pather Sahib, 25 km. from Leh. Guru Nanak visited this place in 1517. A story is retold that an evil man tried to kill the Guru by rolling a boulder as he sat meditating here. When the rock touched the Guru, a portion of it melted away. The boulder is carefully preserved within the shrine. Now glimpses of the Sindhu civilization are flickering in a part of Kashmir.

The Sindhu and other sacred rivers

The Sindhu

The Sindhu emerging from Mansarovar lake (Tibet) about 16000 ft above sea level enters Ladakh as a small stream. After traversing majestically about 500 miles through cold desert, it enters Pak-held-Kashmir, thence to west Pakistan. On the way it's mingled with many tributaries and becomes a mighty *'Darya'* (In Punjab, it is so called) and *'Mahran'* (In Sindh it is so called). Its length in Pakistan is about 1000 miles. To Sindhi Hindus, it's as sacred as the Ganga to common Hindus. Muslim of Sindh consider is a gift of nature to desert country as the Nile is to Egypt. Many Sindhi Hindus worship this river reverentially-are called 'Daryapanthis'.

The ancient Aryans who descended on the plains of India from central Asia were ecstatic and thrilled to sight the majestically flowing waters of the river Sindhu and lush green forests and farms on its banks. They were already worshipping five elements of nature, *kshiti, jal, agni, gagan, vayu* and waters of the Sindhu river were considered synonym with the god *Varuna* (the god of water).

Since most of the civilizations flourished on the banks of rivers, their worship stemmed from the recognition of their significant role in the human history. The sages who composed the hymns of *Rigveda* praised the contribution of sacred rivers of north India also called this as benevolent and bountiful river. The celebrated Indus civilization on the Sindhu river was the earliest civilization in the world. The earliest *Prakrit* later Sanskrit language with perfection was invented in this Sindhu region. For a longtime, the settlement of intelligent and industrious community on the banks of Sindhu whom the Persians later called the Hindus, gradually moved to the east where they found the Ganga, the Saraswati and the Yamuna. Later on, the holy books of ancient Aryans gave equal sacramental importance to these three rivers. At the commencement of every Hindu religious ceremony, the priest invokes the blessings of three sacred rivers by chanting the *Vedic Mantras.* The elevated status of river waters is also reiterated in the mythical accounts of superhuman endeavours employed to bring these waters down from the abode of the gods to the earth by king Bhagirath after a thousand years of penance is an instance.

The Ganga

No other river in the world is held in so much esteem and has such aura of mystique around it, as the Ganga, whom Hindus world

over address as the mother and worship it as goddess. Even scientists are swayed by the mystic sensation of the nature. "The most beautiful and most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the essence of all true science", so said Albert Einstein. In order to enjoy the sense of fulfillment and complete communion with the nature, one need not deeply probe the mystical phenomenon. The beauty of particular myth lies in its obscurity and ignorance and not in the scientific enquiry. It was the time when "The ignorance was a bliss."

So let us enjoy the mythological story that flowing from the toe of Vishnu, the Ganga came down to earth in answer to the prayers of King Bhagiratha to purify ashes of the sixty thousand sons of King Sagara burnt to ashes by the furious looks of Kapila Muni whom they had insulted.

Though the Ganga came down with great force on the earth over the ashes of the sons of Sagara, the God Shiva absorbed its force and allowed its flow quietly over through his hair like other *Sapta Sindhu* or the seven sacred rivers (Saraswati, Yamuna, Sutlaj, Beas, Ravi and Jehlum). So sacred and holy is the Ganga that other names given to it are associated with the celebrated mythological characters like *Alaknanda* (from the locks of Shiva), *Devi Bhuti* (heaven produced), *Gandini* (ever singing), *Mandakini* (gently flowing). It passes through nine states – wherein the holiest Hindu shrines are situated – Hardwar, Rishikesh, Varanasi, Prayag and Gangasagar. Actually at Dev Prayag, there is a confluence of Bhagirathi and Alaknanda and the Ganga is born. Stately and majestic, she proceeds on her journey to Gangasagar, Bay of Bengal, carrying the elements of diversity with her.

Varanasi or Kashi – the holiest city in India

This ancient holy pilgrimage on the Ganga is woven with many ideals and moral stories.

A scholar in Sanskrit *Shashtras* a young Keralite Sanyasi Shankarcharya about 1200 years ago, travelled every corner of India in search of truth and knowledge. There is a story of his encounter with an untouchable on the streets of Varanasi. When Shankar ordered him to give way, the *Shudra*, to his great amazement, replied in Sanskrit "Who and what should go away and whom or where? If you are thinking of body, how is my body different from your body? Are we both not made of the same matter of five elements? Is the sun reflected in the Ganga different from the sun reflected elsewhere?" Shankaracharya immediately realized the imperfection of his knowledge and accepted the untouchable as his Guru.

To Hindus this holy place on the bank of the Ganga is most venerated one. This city has long multi-cultural tradition. The Bhuddha, Shankaracharya, Kabir, Premchand, Tulsidas, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mahatma Gandhi stayed, visited, offered their surmons or voiced their dissent on its banks. The 19th century Amercian writer wrote of this ancient city, "It is older than history, older than tradition, older ever than legend and looks twice as old as all of them put together.

The water of the Ganga is considered the elixir of Life (*Amruta)* and a bath in it purifies one of all his sins. Unfortunately, this holy river is being polluted by poisonous effluents, dead animals and corpses. It is sad that the holy water is gradually becoming impure incapable of consumption. The Government of India established "The Ganga Authority" in 1985 for the cleansing purpose. But very little progress has been achieved. How then the "Ganga Jal" can be used on the auspicious events?

In spite of dark shadows of pollution on this holy river, this is the river to which the pilgrims flock in lakhs from far areas just to take a dip on *Kartik Purnima* at Mukteshwar Ghat or Ganga Sagar (Kolkata) on Maker Sankranti in Hardwar and Prayag during the *Kumbh Mela*.

The Yamuna

The Yamuna or Jamuna river like the Ganga is also steeped in mythology. Another fast flowing Himalyan river Tons is a tributary of Yamuna at its confluence (*sangam*) at Kalsi is surely mother of the Yamuna. Today, the Yamuna coursing fast from the snowfed Himalayas in Himachal reaches Yamunasagar in Haryana wherefrom it moves slowly and majestically and turns towards Delhi. It is understood that its present route is a recent one as its earlier source had flowed past Kurukshetra, Sirsa and Ratangarh to empty into the bed of the river of Loni (Rajputana) flowing south of Jodhpur entering Tharparkar (now in Pakistan) then to Gulf of kutch. Earthquakes, the seismic movement of siltation might have caused a slight rise in the plain forcing the route of this river towards east – Brindaban, Mathura, Agra and Prayag *sangam*.

Legend has it that the river unfortunately passed through the land of the Kauravas and after their defeat in the Mahabharat battle at Kurukshetra, it was given the humiliating name of *Tams* i.e. sorrow. The area held by the Kauravas was the remote and in thicky forested hills skirting Himachal and Tibet and was inaccessible till recent times. The source of the Tons was the melting ice of glaciers above the *Har-ki-Dun* or the valley of Gods, overlooking the peeks of *Swargarohini*

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that is, the road to heaven. Among Pandavas, Yudhishtra was virtuous and saintly. The said peak was unclimbed so far, but only Yudhishtra and his dog had ascended it to reach heaven. The other Pandavas were not worthy and virtuous. They were left behind to suffer.

The victorious family of Pandavas ruled in the upper Ganga and the eastern Yamuna, the sister of Yama, the ruler of dead. They declared it a holy river and its source of *Yamnotri*, a place of pilgrimage. Nevertheless, the Tons has a greater history before the time of Mahabharata since the legendary river Saraswati was a source therefrom.

At present the unhealthy and grey water checked by the Okhla barrage near Delhi carries effluents, fertilizers and garbage and they have dangerously polluted the Yamuna waters. In its downward journey to the holy places to Brindaban and Mathura, the Yamuna water would be more toxic and lifeless endangering the health of pilgrims and flora fauna. The lack of national interest and civic sense have made the Yamuna the river of sorrow.

The safe and purified transportation of water has a direct correlation with the improved health. When French cities improved their water supply and waste disposal systems between 1890 and 1900, the life expectancy increased from 32 to 45. There is hardly any concerted effort in India to purify the Yamuna. Unfortunately the authorities are indifferent to the welfare of growing population as the river water remains the main source of life in India and its cleanliness ignored.

The Saraswati : the river which vanished

In the *Rig Veda* this river is praised as the mother among the rivers.

The *Rig Veda slokas* celebrate the nourishing and fluent aspect of the river Saraswati. In vedic times, the Saraswati was the name of a river. Among the many *Rigvedic* hymns which celebrate the fluent, nurturing aspect of the waters, a particularly beautiful one – *'Ambitame, Naditame, Devitame, Saraswati'* – prays to the river "upon whom all our lives depend" to turn her worshippers from ignorance towards knowledge.

The poet who composed the verse obviously cherished the fact that every child learns from his or her history book today – that, like rare lotuses blooming in the wilderness, great civilizations sprang up along the banks of mighty rivers like the Sindhu, the Ganga, the Euphrates and the Nile.

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It is learnt that the course of the Saraswati commenced from the Himalayan foothills to the Kutch gulf through Rajputana and the *Thar* desert. It is reasoned out that in the past Vedic time, the river Saraswati is believed to have disappeared at the spot known as Vinashana in Kurukshetra. The cause seemed to be the gigantic geological upheaval. Such was a great uphearval that the Sindhu and the Yamuna also changed the courses and Dwarka city in Saurashtra also submerged in the Arbian sea. In the last chapter of Mahabharat, Lord Krishna warned the citizens of Dwarka to evacuate Dwarka before it submerged. A 350 Km land survey conducted in 1985 by the Central water dept. from Adibadri (Haryana) to Somnath (Gujarat) has yielded over 160 sites on the dried-up course of this river. Its course presumably traversed Thar district of Sindh and ended near Koteshwar (Kutch). Its nearness to the Sindhu and the number of allusions to the Saraswati in the *Rig Veda* reinforces the belief that it was part of the Indus civilization.

The Discovery of Mohen-Jo-Daro by accident

The superintendant of the Indian Archealogical Dept. Rakhaldas Banarjee was surveying the dry bed of Beas river in Punjab in 1918 to locate the rumoured ruined fort of the Great soldier Alexander, the great (320 BC). He slowly progressed in his delicate work on the Alexander trail via Bikaner and Bahawalpur States. Sensing historical links, he reached the ruined spot of the present day Mohen-jo-Daro (Larkana). Stunned, he sighted a ruined Buddha temple with some broken stupa. This elevated spot was found 46 ft. above Sindhu river level. The local villagers told him that they found strange shaped articles, stones and terracotta and suspected some hidden treasure was beneath the earth. They were vandalising it irregularly. After closely examining the ruined articles, Rakhaldas came to conclusion that he has stepped upon the ruins of the oldest civilization. His dept. dispatched the photographs of the ruins to London where they appeared in the "Illustrated London News" on 20th September, 1924. This magazine has a world wide circulation. It announced grandly the discovery of the Indus Civilization to have dawned upon the world - specially discovered in the British Empire. Many international scholars linked the discovery with the ruins of Mesepotamia (Iraq) civilization. But they admitted the superiority of Mohen-Jo-Daro.

Sufism animated by holy love

Tasawwuf or mysticism has been a very important stream within Islamic thought. Representing as it does the inward and esoteric side of faith, it emphasizes spirituality rather than ritual. This emphasis is known to the world principally through the *sufi fakirs* and saints. Like the *Bhakti*-saint-poets, the *sufis* didn't believe in artificial divisions – on account of various faiths and religions. Rejecting bigotry, they stressed the need for ultimate union with the creator for which selfless inexhaustible love was essential. Shah Abdul Latif (1690-1751AD), Shah Inayat (martyred in 1718AD), Sachal Sarmast (1739-1826 AD), Bedil, Sai Rochaldas and many others are often considered *sufi* sindhi poets as they indirectly preached love for god and final union with Him by absolute surrender. In this union or unity what remains of the existence of 'I' or 'thou'? Sachal Sarmast exposed the *Mullas* and *Shaikhs*, and hit them for their dogmas and hypocrisy. He proclaimed Fariduddin Attar as his master and explained *Anal Haq* like martyred Mansur did.

Those who don't know
the ground where treasure lies,
pass over it, time and again,
but don't discover it.
So also, all these creature
go, day after day
here to this place
where all perfection lies -
And yet don't find it.
For they are kept distracted
by unreality. (Mithya)

Mozart distinguished musician of 17th century of Europe appreciatively spoke of his junior upcoming artiste Beethoven "Pay attention to him, he will make a noise in the world some day or other." So said Shah Latif of Sachal : "He will lift the lid of the vessel we have set to boil." Sachal soon, by his divine lyrical poetry enriched Sufi literature.

The human soul is an emanation of His grace, though divided for a time being, will eventually be united with it and then the highest possible happiness would arise from this union. This way the Vedant describes that *Atman* pines for the re-union with the *Parmatma*.

The poetry of many Sindhi Sufis is fundamentally allegorical in that they resort to the vernacular of visible symbols in order to draw man's attention to the world of invisible.

☆☆☆☆

Some Sindhi Saints

Sindh has been a unique state since the ancient times. This soil has been perhaps blessed by largest number of saints, *fakirs* and *darveshes* who sang the praises of Lord and preached universal brotherhood, love and compassion.

The earliest legendary savant and seer Sai Uderolal, also called Amarlal or Jhulelal, was born in 950AD when Sindh was ruled by the bigot and cruel Muslim ruler Mirkh Shah. He ill-treated Hindu subject and ordered them to embrace Islam or face persecution. The harassed Hindus assembled the on bank of river Sindhu, Thatta, and prayed God *Varuna* for the protection. Miraculously, a horse-riding saintly figure emerged from the waves and blessed the gathering with as assurance. It is said, *Uderolal* appeared in the dream of the ruler frequently and urged him to treat his subject compassionately and equally. The advice of the seer had chastening effect on the ruler who softened his attitude towards the Hindu – subject. Thereafter, Sindh had a long line of saints and *Murshids* – both Hindus and Muslims – whose broad and secular outlook established communal harmony and peace in Sindh for centuries.

As said, the hundred of sages and sufi mystics, living, simple and austere life established their shrines which echoed with the serene music of complete surrender to the will of god. Such shrines, no doubt, created peaceful and harmonious atmosphere. *Sufi Kalam*, lyrical poetry, spiritual discourses, coupled with charitable activities had illuminating and salutary effect on the society on the one hand, and guidance and succour to their disciples on the other hand. The Muslim *Dargahs* of Shah Daraza of Sachal Sarmast and *Bhit Shah* of Shah Latif had a large Hindu following.

After the birth of Sikh *panth* in Punjab, the *Pracharaks* (Preachers) and *Bhais* (Musicians) frequently toured many towns and villages of Sindh to spread the divine message of the Guru Granth Sahib. Finding receptive and pious atmosphere, the wandering saints settled in many hamlets for starting of *Satsang*. Soon community singing of *Shabad* and *Kirtan* became popular, most of the Hindu shrines began to sanctify 'Guru Granth Sahib'.

Shah Latif of Bhit

Shah Abdul Latif (1690-1751AD) of Bhit, Halla near Hyderabad Sindh is considered the greatest sufi sindhi poet. Like the greatest

mystic of the east, Jalaluddin Rumi, he believed in the unity of human race. Latif has based most of his poetry (*kalam*) on simple folk stories with allegory whereby he shares with the readers his mystical experiences. Each story is with a double meaning which passes on the message of final union with ultimate god through the vehicle of love, devotion and submission. His poetry is steeped in *Bhakti-rasa*.

Prayers and the sacred fast –
They too are virtuous things
But that is another art
which brings the beloved face to face

Shah's mystical Sindhi poetry is enshrined in 'Shah Jo Risalo' considered a remarkable treatise on literary, social, prevalent conditions in 18th century Sindh. The folk stories lyrically and poetically narrated by almost double meaning are simple country and earthy stories which might not have been known, had they not been versified in poignant and thrilling manner. In his verses Shah has often emphasized the character, devotion and surrender as sterling qualities of a woman. A woman that is good, loyal and chaste, can make a monarch of her begger mate. His allegory in the poetry of converting *Ishq Majazi* (physical love) to *Ishq Haquiqi* (spiritual love) is commensurate with the law of nature. Out of his seven folk stories we have chosen six for this publication. Even all six stories didn't originate in Sindh. Moomal Mahindra is a Rajasthani folklore. Rai Diach is a Saurashtra story, Sohni Mahiwal is a Punjabi romance. Folk stories are : 1) Sasui-Punhoon, 2) Sohni-Mahiwal, 3) Rai Diach and Bijal, 4) Leela-Chanesar, 5) Umar Maruee, 6) Moomal-Mahindra.

These Folk stories are incorporated in this book.

Of Sadhubela Shrine

A saint from Patiala, Swami Varkhandi Maharaj travelling widely came and settled on an Isle of Sindhu river near Sukkur in 1745. He found the area very appealing. The surrounding thickets were verdant, the stream full with nector, the jungle on the isle thriving with colourful birds and docile animals. The surrounding hills were embraced by white clouds and the air was crisp and cool. Soon the spot became pilgrimage and simple folks began to flock here for the Swamiji's Darshan. In series of succession, Swami Harnamdas succeeded to the helm of affairs of the shrine in 1900. He is credited with initiation of many charitable and social activities like setting up of clinics, nursing homes, nurseries and educational institutions. The tradition of service and humanitarian activities continue till today from Sadhubela, Mumbai.

Of Alakhdam Shrine

About 300 years ago one *Almast* a wandering ascetic from Punjab sailing through the Sindhu river settled down at a hamlet called Saidabad, near Halla. In a series of successors, finally Swami Santdas had to migrate India (Ujjain) under the compelling circumstances after partition. A shrine called Alakhdham Ashram (Ujjain) is at present looked after by a fresh successor Swami Atmaram.

Of Shadhani Darbar

Saint Shadaram (1708) conveying divine message from place to place finally settled in Hayatpitafi, Sukkur, where Shadani shrine was founded and sacred lamp was lighted. Sindh *Darbar* is vibrant with sacramental activities. Its branch shrine is set up in Raipur after partition.

Swami Lilashah

More than a religious head, Swami Lilashah was a revolutionary social reformer. He was born in 1880 in a small hamlet near Hyderabad. At the young age 10 he became an orphan but was soon adopted by a countryside shrine maintained by Lakhumal. Grinding poverty, illiteracy and ill health of Sindhi tribesmen in *Laar,* south Sindh pained him and he decided to take up cudgels for their betterment. Vowed to remain celibate, he worked for the upliftment of downtrodden. Side by side, he made a deep study of Hindu scriptures and Vedic wisdom. Soon he was known as Lilashah. He travelled over Himalayan shrines where under the supervision of adept yogis, he learnt yoga *Asanas*, Meditation and *Bhakti lore*. After partition, he undertook upon himself the task of rehabilitation of uprooted Sindhi-Hindus. His many splendoured social activities include dowryless mass weddings, setting up of charitable clinics, dairies, health homes, satsang classes. Personally he was pious, unassuming dedicated sage. He died in 1973. His missionary activities – have been taken over by his dedicated disciples.

Sami – the versifier

Chainrai Lund born in 1743 in Shikarpur was inclined to the matters above mundane and spent his time in the company of saintly persons. He was much impressed by the lofty and *Vedantic* knowledge of Swami Menghraj of Bahawalpur whom he addressed as his Master (Swami/Sami). He wrote over 1000 Sindhi *Vedantic slokas* with the pen name 'Sami' giving due respect to his master. Late 19th century scholar-saint Raj Rishi Dayaram Gidumal has enlightened us in his

essays on the simplified *vedantic* education enshrined in the *sami-a-ja-sloka*. Five human vices or weaknesses are the powerful enemies. If one follows their dictates, surely the miseries are in our store. To overcome them, Sami recommends the company of a learned sage or a Guru. The Guru is capable of bestowing true knowledge or education for the uplift of soul and controlling the vices.

Sadhu T. L. Vaswani – Sage who inspired India to awake

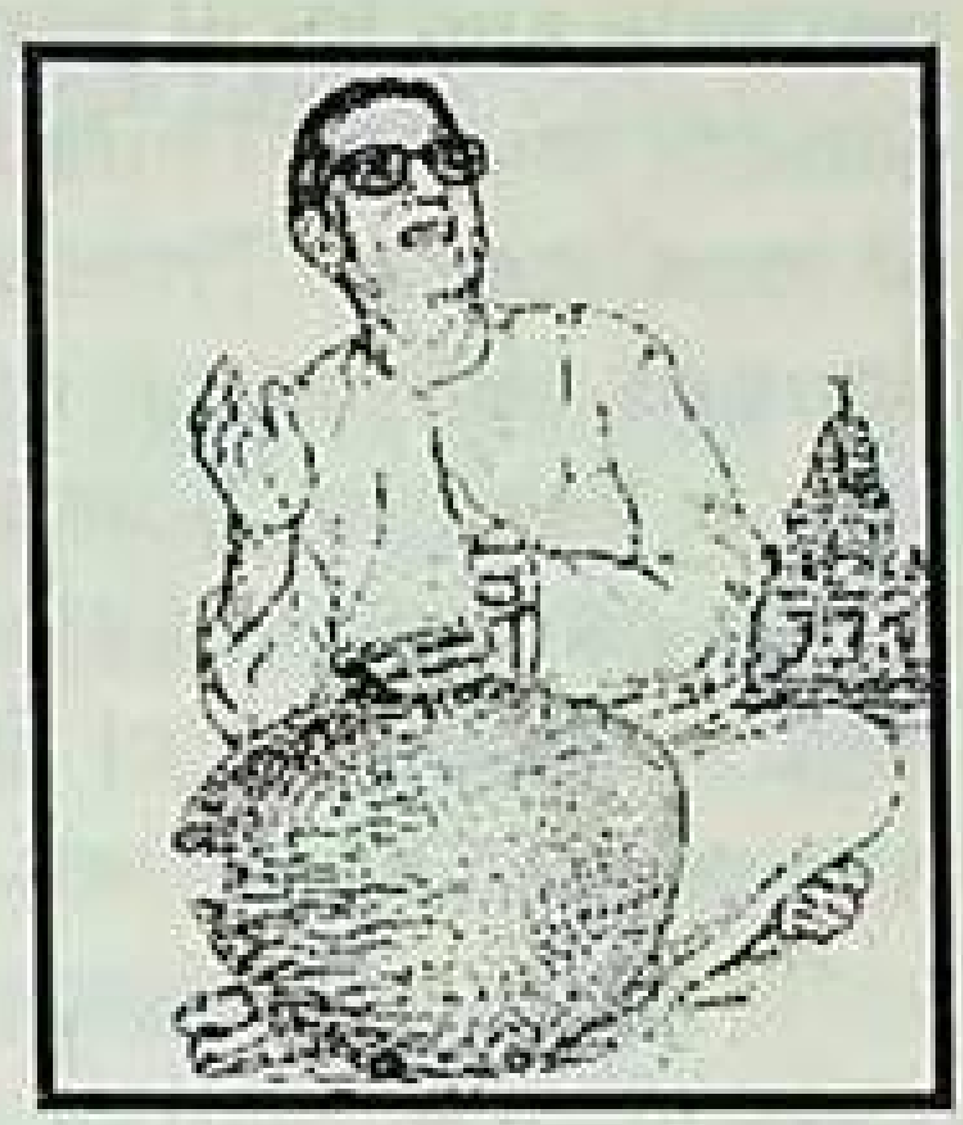
Belonging to illustrious line of Sindhi saints, seers and mystics perhaps last sufi-sage with Sindh moorings, Sadhu T. L. Vaswani (born in 1879 in Hyderabad) preached personal rectitude and good character *(Sadachar)* as a solution to the ills of mankind. He tried to convince us that our cause of growing in spiritual darkness was due to our being lost in the labyrinth of ritual dogmas, ignoring the true spirit of divine light. He wore a spiritual garland. Bubbling with scholarly and poetic enthusiasm, he wrote and expressed his teachings both in Sindhi and English with ease. During his formative period, he headed many educational institutions, the experience wherefrom inspired him to spread ideal-education suited to the progress of youth. This prompted him to found the Mira educational movement in Hyderabad in 1933. He realized that youth's ferment of fresh ideas, vitality of spirit and modern concept would channel to hasten the society's uplift. His training methods laid stress on the cultural value combined with the modern spirit of scientific enquiry. He enjoyed popular acclaim that extended far beyond academic and literary circles- i.e. his multipurpose charitable deeds and healing smile and touch to his followers. He was bejewelled with gems of mysticism, poetry, philosophy and education. He was well versed in ancient knowledge and modern rational thought.

Till today, his ideal institutions flourish in Pune This saintly figure, celibate, dedicated to his mission. He achieved Nirvan in 1966. Before his departure, he handed over the flag of his mission to a young disciple Shri Jashan Vaswani who has since then enlarged the horizon of Master's missionary activities.

Temples and churches and mosques have
Their values indeed, but we must not forget,
That the temple to which the Lord doth.
Call us to worship Him and to receive
His sacrament is the temple of life.
Sadhu T. L. Vaswani

J. P. Vaswani

The spirit of Bhagat



At the fag end of 19th century and at the dawn of 20th century Sindh reverberated with the devotional music of Hindu saints and mystic Muslim Sufis.

Imagine in absence of electricity, when there were no lights, no modern theatres, no radios, no T.V.s, no fans nor loud speakers. Under the vast canopy of blue skies at night time, on the open fields of small hamlets, a folk singer-cum-story teller through Bhagat (folk art) would not only convey spiritual message but entertain and regale illiterate but faithful masses with holy *bhajans, kalam,* lyrical prayers laced with allegorical/epic stories couplets and quotations. The evils of dowry, gambling and drinking were also highlighted intermittently. The illiterate audience, spell-bound, would sit on rough soil till the day-break. The present day gramophone or tape music pales before the pristine earthy vocal and sweet voice of Bhagats. The low and high pitch of Bhagat's rendering would emotionally please the listeners and moisten their eyes – the soft melody trailed till the grey Sindh dawn. Ecastatically pleased, the poorest of poor would contribute his mite in the lap of the Bhagat. The Bhagat would conclude his Bhagat with prayer song or *Ardas* seeking divine blessings. The Bhagat would then distribute all the collections to the needy, the crippled and the widows. Out of trance, the listeners would then melt away.

Bhagat a tradition of narrating religious, moral, martial and social stories interlaced with music, comedy, tragedy by wandering minstrels in countryside Sindh was unique phenomenon as it unified scattered community in absence of modern communication. To our mind Bhagat Kanwar Ram (1885-1939) who gained the status of saint was extraordinary humble, devoteed and a gifted singer. He sang extempore variety of Bhajans or kalam suited to the event. He just touched the right chord of devotees and held them spellbound as his melodious voice pervaded like soft drizzle of rain. Till 1939 with his artiste colleagues he moved from village to village at the call of his devotees and shrines. He served the community selflessly. Married, he led a normal family life and eked out his existence by own vocation never to touch public contribution for the personal needs. He was born in a desert village Jarwara, north Sindh. He came under the influence of pious

parents and local guru Satramdas. His guru advised him to learn Sindhi music. Thus he practised *riyaaz* all night on the banks of local canal. These rehearsals soon became regular all night soirees with large attendance, helping him develop his voice into a flexible, powerful and magnetic force. He was a gentle and a caring soul steeped in the composite Hindu-Muslim unity and sufi culture of the time, whose sensitivity and humanism was all too apparent.

Unfortunately he was assassinated by the hirelings of a jealous Muslim peer of neighbouring village.

In ancient times, the Bhagat was lyrical mass prayer with a leading role of solo Bhagat. But later on, it was corrupted to become a vehicle of mass and earthy entertainment. But later Bhagats were accompanied by one or two sycophants. To reinforce and revitalise the Bhagat's story, they would add rhythmic and humourous couplet after couplet, in a lighter vein to create a delightful atmosphere.

Prof. Ram Panjwani (1911-1987) can be aptly termed as a modern Bhagat. He was born in Larkana Sindh, came under the scholarly influence of his senior poet Kishinchand 'Bewas'. A many splendoured personality, Prof. Ram Panjwani was a college teacher, playwright, novelist, poet, folk-singer and above all a social worker. With magnetic quality of gift of gab and oratory, he would draw masses. After partition (1947) Sindhi Hindu refugees staying forlorn in various dingy camps, suffered untold privations and miseries. He was one of the contributing factors for their rehabilitation, founding a numerous educational institutions, hospitals and *dharamshalas*. But for his Herculean cultural compaign, the Sindhi community might have lost its indentity *'Sindhyat'* and cultural heritage. Wearing the flowing robes of Bhagat he would entertain Sindhi masses in the refugee camps, encouraging them to community singing and prayers. He revived the celebration of 'Chatichand' in India and abroad. He continued the tradition of Bhagat Kanwar Ram of distributing the contributions to the needy. His mission of reviving the Sindhi values, ethos, music, Bhagat and literature is blossoming by his dedicated disciples. In early eighties of 20th century, the establishment of 'Sita Sindhu Bhavan', Santacruz, Mumbai, fulfilled his brave wish for centre for flowering of Sindhi music and culture.

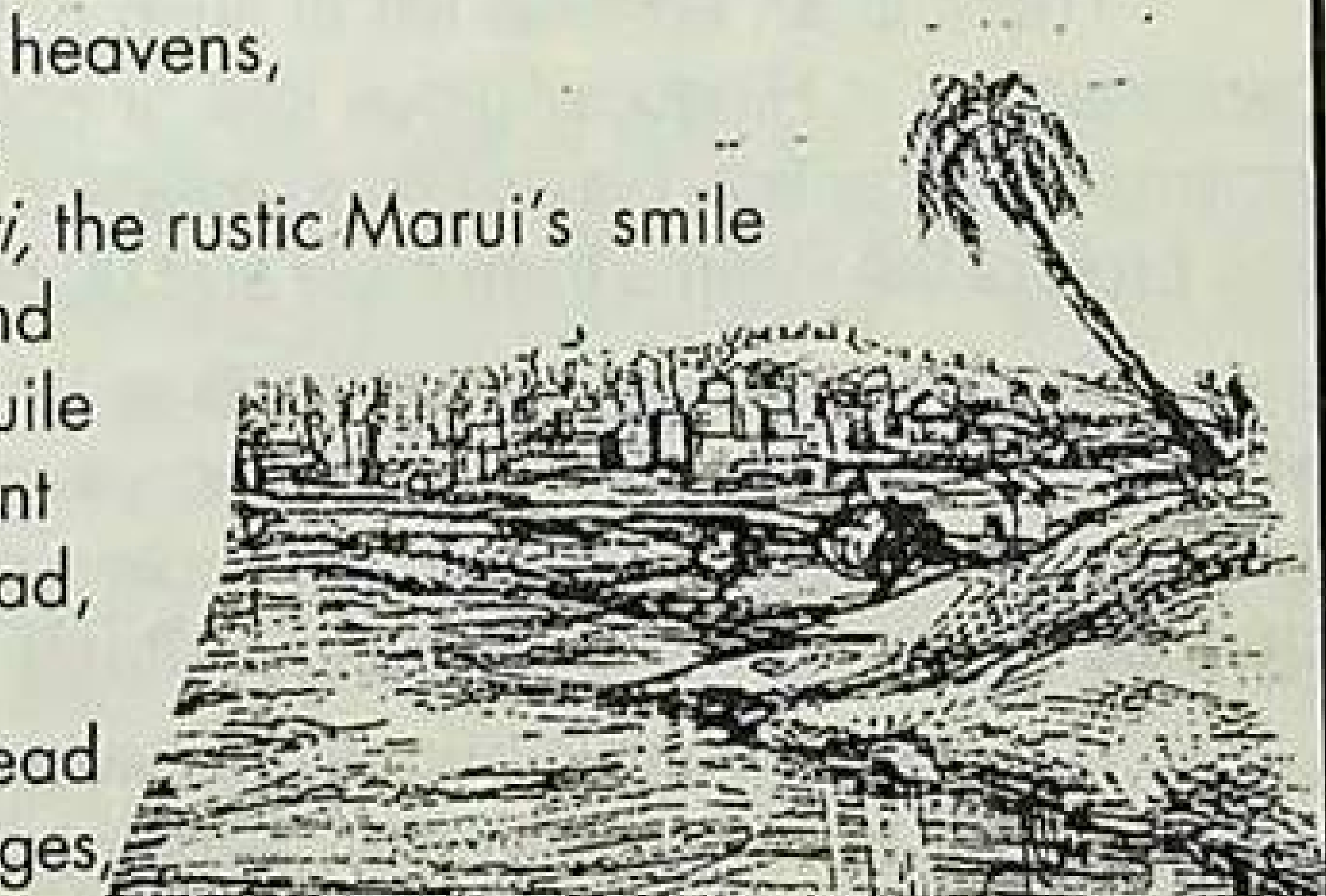
Chowki – symbolic mass lyrical prayer

Abdul Wahhab (1739-1826) one of the earliest shining sufi luminaries was known as Sachal Sarmast (living truth and god-drunk) belonged to Daraza Dargah (Khairpur). The absolute love for divine or Master was his forte. He was revolutionary as he exposed Muslim clerics of their dogmas and hyprocrisy . Like ancient Persian Sufi martyr Mansoor, he exclaimed *Anal Haq* (I am a divine truth). His most of the poems specially *kafi* (mystic songs) are lyrical – self effacing and brimming with absolute surrender. Often in a sober communal gathering, he sat deeply meditating while his disciples sang his *Kalam* one after another. The solemn gathering singing in unison, in most devoted and prayful mood, is called *Chowki*.

The successor after successor of this holy shrine encouraged this sedative prayer practice (*chowki*). In the line of succession the name of Sakhi Kabool Mohammed, sage, is mostly revered and remembered by his surviving disciples. He was longhearted, generous, humble and well wisher of every visiting disciple. It is widely believed that most of the wishes of his disciples got fulfilled by his benediction and blessing. Till today, the *Chowki* in his name is celebrated on his birthday by his devotees in Pakistan and India by mass singing of Sachal and other devotional *Kalam*.

Song of Sindh - *Sohini*

Your song Oh Sindh-*ri Sohini*
Is the song of birds and bees
The ripples in the Sindhu river,
And gentle blowing breeze,
would take us to the seven heavens,
Ecstasy would never cease
The anguish of Sindh - *Hari,* the rustic Marui's smile
Are haunting us as ever and
Your dust would even beguile
Thy soil is fresh and fragrant
Upon which holy Fakirs tread,
And the sons of your soil
were bound by blissful thread
Your great epics and wise sages,
Bards of love and mirth
have brightened the million
Souls of this frail earth.



The glory of Guru Granth Sahib

Sindh was the earliest target of the Islamic assault i.e. 712 AD. The Muslim adopting different roles from time to time continued to rule till 1843 when the British tookover its control after winning the battle at Hyderabad. Till then, the flower of Hindu religion had almost withered away, its shrines descrated and idols destroyed.

However, Guru Nanak preaching dogma-free simple and righteous Sikh order visited Sindh twice in the 16th century and set up some *gurdwaras*. Thereafter the Hindu acetics and saints seated the holy granth on the elvated cots for their devotees to pay homage to it everyday.

The Sindhi Hindus revere and respect *Guru Granth Sahib* as their own holy book and on every happy or sober occasion they invoke this *Granth*'s sacred hymn or '*Vachan Sahib Gurbani*' for seeking solace and satisfaction. After partition, the Sindhi Hindus migrated almost *en masse* from Sindh and spread over every nook and corner of India – and also the globe and with them they carried respectfully their holy heritage – '*Guru Granth Sahib*'.

The Hindus believe that whenever there is a violation of basic norms of *Dharma* or the shadow of evil creeps over the sensitive sheet of goodness, the God assumes the dynamic human form as a brave, superior, super-hero to annihilate the ill-doer or devil, curb the evil forces and establish social justice, truth and righteousness.

There is an endless list of such mystics, saints and dynamic personalities in Hindu religious lore or political history in India, who incarnated on critical occasions to establish righteousness or *Dharma* and protect the victims from cruel and bigot rulers.

Guru Nanak was born in 1469 at Talwandi (Punjab) at the time when there was an oppressive Islamic rule in India and harassed Hindu masses were not only tortured by the rulers but themselves were deeply steeped in the harmful superstitious rituals and dogmas.

They tenaciously clung to the dead conventions of caste, high caste Hindus, priests and wealthy persons exploited poor and illiterate. The chaotic and unruly conditions were specially noticed in the North India.

The Sikhism as propounded by Baba Nanak (1469-1536) was

fundamentally pacific. He belonged to that illustrious line of saints and mystics who preached personal rectitude as a solution to the ills of mankind. He was also an apostle of reform.

He was Guru or incarnation of God to the Hindus, *Pir* to the Muslims and the first Guru of Sikh *Panth*. Nanak was a saintly child who spoke words of wisdom beyond his age. His manners were impeccable, his courtesy unmatched his humility genuine. His father, worried of the child's spiritual inclination, one day gave him twenty rupees and ordered him to do *Sacha Sauda*, (same profitable trade).On his way to the rural market, he saw some famished and hungry *Sadhus* who had not eaten for days. Nanak promptly bought food for them with the father's money and fed the grateful *Sadhus* with great reverence and love. Back, home, his father was furious. Nanak then calmly explained that by feeding hungry human beings, he only obeyed his order to do so, because feeding the hungry was most profitable trade, a *Sacha Sauda*.

Guru Nanak attempted to reform the degraded society by experimenting a synthesis of both religions; Hinduism and Islam. He asked Hindus to give up the caste differences and abandon the belief in a multitude of Gods. (Incidentally 500 years later, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj, propagated the same principles in Punjab). The Guru declared there was only one invisible God (*Nirankar*) whose *Namo-Japo* (recite His name) alone would enable a man to achieve immense ecstasy and self-realisation. To Muslims, he addressed that revenge, arrogance and violence would not lead the believers to *Jannat* or deliverance but, it was humility, gentleness and righteousness which formed the base of the true faith. Like the bee gathering honey from different flowers, Baba Nanak accepted and preached the essence of different scriptures and saw only the goodness of all religions.

The Guru's self image, as the voice of God and saviour of the social conscious and antipodean source of the spiritual authority sets against the temporal power reflected in Nanak's words, "The iron Age is a sword, the kings are butchers, *Dharma* is fleeing. In dark night of deception, the moon of truth has been clouded over".

The Sikhism established the spiritual legacy and tradition of nominating Gurus in succession, Guru Arjun Dev (1563-1606) was fifth Guru who revitalised Sikhism. It was he, who built the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the foundation stone whereof was laid by the then Muslim Pir Hazrat Miyan Mir – so much was sincerity of this *Panth* even during the dark days.

This Guru complied *Adi Granth* (1604 A.D.) in *Gurmukhi* script. He composed '*Sukhmani Sahib*'. Besides hymns composed by his four predecessors (Guru Nanik, Guru Angad, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas), Guru Arjan Dev enshrined therein psalms by many *sufis* and saints like Kabir, Ravidas, Namdev and Baba Farid, Trilochan and the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (10th *Patshahi*), further added the compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur (who achieved martyrdom during the rule of Aurangzeb) and gave the scripture a final form.

The Sikhism flourished during the Mughal rule. The relations between the Sikhs as a dissident sect, and the imperial Mughals since Babar to Akbar had long been cordial. But Akbar's son Jehangir was fanatic ruler. He could not tolerate his coreligionists flocking to Sikh Gurus. Therefore, he falsely implicated Guru Arjun Dev of offering shelter to his rebellious son Khushru. Apparently, Jehangir was furious and punished Guru by executing him. That was the type of barbaric justice during the Mughal rule... (called *Adal-E-Jehangir*). But this Guru's martyrdom, gradually converted mild Sikhs into martial race.

Reverting to the noble principles of *Guru Granth Sahib*, it repeatedly records that the caste is of no consequence in the realization of the Supreme truth. Its simple and intense utterances invest it with an appeal which cuts across the barriers of castes.

There are 5894 hymns in the *Granth* and the large number are composed by Guru Arjun Dev. Most of the hymns, or *Gurbani* can be sung in melodious and mellifluous voice. There is not a meter known to Indian prosody that was not employed by the Guru. Actually the Gurus introduced new variations to make their compositions more musical. The *shabads* or hymns of the *Granth* are arranged according to the musical measures *rahas* in which they are meant to be sung. The *Granth* is imbued not only with spirit of devotion but also poetry and musicality, which can be rendered in 31 Hindustani *Ragas*.

Guru Nanak's *Japaji* – a morning prayer, is followed by nine *Shabads* or hymns in Asa and *gujri* ragas collectively known as *Rahraas Sahib* which are sung in the evening.

These are followed by hymns in *ragas Gauri Deepak Asa* and *Dhanasari* known as *sohla* which are chanted at bedtime. Other important composition include *Sahkriti slokas* by Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Arjun Dev '*Anand Sahib*' by Guru Amardas is devotional song in the praise of Lord.

The other saints and *bhaktas* whose songs or verses are included in *Guru Granth Sahib* belong mostly to the lower classes of the society. Kabir was a weaver (*Kori*), Ravidas a shoemaker, (*chamar*) and Sain, a

barber (*Nai*), Pipa among the composers, was a King and Trilochan a brahamin, and Namdev, a Maratha from Maharashtra.

It is amazing to note that in the middle ages when bigot and autocrat Muslim rule pervaded over India, travelling and communication were tortuous and arduous, the Guru's mission was functioning. The 16th century Maratha saint Namdev spent nearly 20 years of his life in Gurdaspur (Punjab) and composed number of devotional lyrics in Hindi. Sixtyone stanzas written by the Maratha saint are part of the holy *Guru Granth*.

Certain hymns contain message to brave injustice and violence. The last Guru Guru Gobind Singh had to wage war against Aurangazeb who had unleashed ruthless cruelties upon the gentle Hindu subjects. Guru Gobind Singh had the prudence to realise that his own inclinations towards peace were irrelevant since the government of the day was capable of unprovoked aggression against the *Dhrama*. Guru Nanak's pacifism was hardly calculated to meet the menace. The doctrine of fraternity and weakness became meaningless in the face of aggression and violence. "When all other means have proven ineffective, it is right for the victims to take up the sword" In spite of life long struggle against the Mughal army, Guru Gobind Singh always followed secular principles. He himself was knifed to death by his loyal Pathan assistant.

In spite of martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur and execution of two innocent children of Guru Gobind Singh, the secular principles of *Guru Granth Sahib* were solid and no where ill-will is displayed against the tenets of any other religion.

Among many holy scriptures, the *Guru Granth Sahib* is a unique epic which propagates secularism, equality, human respect, simple ceremonies on various occasions and *Smiran* round the clock.

Masterpiece quotation of Guru Nanak

After you depart this life,
God shall demand a
reckoning of your deeds,
That in His ledger are recorded.
Those that are rebellious
shall be summoned
Azrael, the angel of death,
Will hover over them
And trapped in a bind
Alley, they will know not any,
escape,
says Nanak, falsehood
must be destroyed
Truth in the end shall prevail.

Guru Granth Sahib- The precious heritage of Sindhi Hindus

The Sikh historical literature specially *Puratan Janamsakhis*, and Nanak Prakash speak volumes of Guru Nanak's extensive travel to every nook and corner of India during the 16th century including Sindh. He also travelled abroad specially to Islamic places of pilgrimage.

There is sufficient historical evidence which shows that many people became his followers under his magical influence of '*Nam Japo*', a preaching of simplicity, purity and ritual-free worship of one God *Nirankar*. Next to Punjabis, Sindhis were the first race which imbibed the secular teachings of Guru Nanak. He was against all kinds of formalism and symbolism – repeatedly urged also by the succeeding *Gurus*.

Guru Nanak visited Sindh twice and on both visits he offered solace to the harassed Hindu subjects tortured by the Muslim rulers, and entered into fearless and meaningful dialogues with Muslim *Peers*, *Maulvees* and rulers. He enlightened them on the true and noble teachings of '*Quran Sharif*' advising them to treat every one justly and compassionately. The succeeding Gurus dispatched their missionaries to Sindh from time to time. Soon several *Gurudwaras* sprung up in Sindh and illiterate Sindhi Hindu women learnt *Gurmukhi* language in order to recite '*Jap-Ji-Sahib*'. *Sukhmani* and sing *shabads*. The birthday of Guru Nanak is rejoicing event for the Sindhi Hindus wherever they live. The '*Shahidi* Days' (Martyrs' days) of Guru Arjun Dev and Guru Tegh Bhahdur are too observed by the Sindhis solemnly. Passing through any Sindhi colony, early dawn, daily, one can hear melodious *Shabad-Kirtan* from a nearby Gurudwara.

'Akhand Path' 'Anand Sahib' 'Asa-Di-Var', 'Bhog Sahib', 'Salok Mahila Nava', etc. have become household sacred terms for this unique community. 'Marriage ceremonies' (*Vivah Sanskar*) and 'Death ceremony' (*Antim Ardas*), solemn and sober, are highly simplified – understood by a common man with simplicity and sincerity – as opposite to elaborate and incomprehensible Hindu religious ceremonies.

The Sindhi Hindu community inculcated the secular ideas – primarily under the influence of *Guru Granth Sahib*. Its traits of tolerance, adaptability, hospitality and generosity became its assets. It is really amazing that any Sindhi-Hindu visiting post-partition Sindh is warmly greeted and affectionately welcomed by the Sindhi Muslims as he never bore animosity to them. The secularism in the community gave birth to other qualities like adventurous-spirit and enterpreneurship.

Sindhi Folk Stories

Sasui and Punhoon

The legendary ruins of site of Bhambore (Sindh) remind us of the folk tale of Sasui Punhoon by the poet Shah Latif. Bhambore ruins are about 40 miles south-east of Karachi on the bank of Gharo creek. Sasui, a beautiful damsel adopted by a Muslim washer-family when she was an infant. Punhoon was tall handsome prince of Jam ruler of desert state Kech-Makran about 200 miles north-west of Bhambore. While on camel-ride business trip, he halted at Bhambore, and sighted this dazzling beauty Sasui, while she was washing clothes. He instantly fell for her – for him it was the love at first sight. Knowing that as a royal family member, washer-family would not accept him nor offer their daughter in marriage, he stayed on and disguised as washerman entered into employment of the Sasui family as an assistant. Unprofessional washing service would have brought forth the complaints from the customers. But he silenced them by inserting a rupee coin in each pressed dress. This employment enabled him to carry on clandestine romance with his beloved. However, parents finding him docile, obedient and diligent offered him their daughter in *Nikah* and allowed him to stay with them. However, Punhoon's ruler father missing his son for a long time, ordered his elder prince to look out for Punhoon and fetch him on camel, bound by strings. After trudging on desert for several days, the wandering prince, got the hint of Punhoon in Bhambore. Eying him privately he schemed to lift him at the dead of night while he slept deep. Sasui's 'Punhal' was taken away surreptitiously from her, while she was in deep slumber, thanks to the evil designs of the brother of her beloved and these designs succeeded precisely because at the moment when she should have been awake, she was fast asleep. On waking up she was appalled to find the terrible fate has betaken her. Leaving behind every thing she ran through hot sands, climb stony hills, crossed stormy rivulets and avoided many evil eyes enroute. In poetic message she conveys to Bhambore friends "I shall fall at his feet, if I sight I will beseech him to return and stay at least one night with me." In the end she collapses exhausted wounded and thirsty. She preferred death to

return empty handed – without apple of her eye. The earth is ripped open and there she collapsed.

The sacred knot that love has tied,
Between Punhoon and me
Now in beauteous Bhambore to stay
Poison for me shall be
Do not advise me sisters, to
Return to home and glee;
Because my breath is property
Of my beloved, Punhoon.

Kidnapped Punhoon, when became conscious of the forcible separation from his beloved, got frenzied mad. Relieving himself from shackles, he jumped off the camel and return on the desert path leading to Bhambore. Running like a vagabond, to unite with Sasui, he reaches the spot where she was buried. He hears from a local shepherd the tragic story of buried dame. From the dangling head cover he recognised it was she. He prayed fervently for his union with the dead consort.

Sohini-Mahiwal

Sohini Mehiwal or Suhini-Mehar in Sindhi language, is tear jerking sensitive love story. Original folk story is derived from the Punjabi poetry of Sayyed Fazal Shah. The dates of story approximate the period of the rule of Moghul emperor Shah Jahan. In Gujrat city of Punjab on the bank of Sindhu, there lived a prosperous potter by name Tula who had a very beautiful daughter naturally named as Sohini – the beautiful. A wandering merchant from Bukhara (Central Asia), Izat Beg passed by the potter's city and was dazzled by pottery works of Tula. While he bargained to buy some pottery products, his eyes noticed smashing beauty Sohini – he almost lost his consciousness. She was a phantom of delight when first she gleamed upon his sight. To glance that beauty, he started visited the potter with the excuse of shopping. While he purchased costly vessels

unnecessarily, he sold them at a throwaway price. In bargain he exhausted all his savings. Nevertheless, he could not resist the charms of the damsel and continued to visit potter commencing his shopping on credit. One day he disclosed his bankruptcy to the potter and to repay his the debts, he volunteered to be in the employ of the potter till the period his debt was cleared. Even this arrangement pleased Izat Beg as the very sight of his beloved daily delighted him. Tula ordered him to take care of his herd of sheep and buffaloes. Thenceforth, he was called 'Mehar' (buffaloherd). One day Sohini visited Mehar's cowshed and demanded fresh milk. As soon she drank it, her heart was filled up with swelling love for 'Mehar'. It was perhaps 'love potion' or '*Prem Amrit*'.

She wept with pity and delight
She blushed with love and virgin shame
And like the murmmer of a dream,
He heard her breathe his name.

He opened his mind to her – that for her sake he become almost a beggar. She too fell madly in love with him, said she would visit him upon excuse of collecting milk every day. Love and cough can't hid. Her parents smelling whiff of this illicit romance, hurriedly married her off with Dam her first cousin and dismissed Mehar from the service. But as her heart was already mortgaged to Mehar, she could not consummate her marriage. She fervently prayed Allah to strengthen her to honour her undying love for Mehar. Miracle did occur. Her husband would dose off early dusk and remain in a deep slumber till dawn. Unemployed and separated from his maiden, Mehar became disheartened, went across the river (opposite Sohini's home) to live life of a hermit. Showering pity and sympathy, local fisher-folks would offer him some loaves and fish. Local populace including women considering him a saintly figure would visit him often. Suspecting hermit as her lover, Sohini crossed over the river to ascertain the truth. Recognising him, she wept bitterly. He promised to swim river every night for a warm rendezvous. As a token of love he would offer cooked fish to her. Unfortunately on one cyclonic night, Mehar's wellwishers could not bring fish to him. Desparately he knifed a slice of his thigh flesh and cooked it and offered it to Sohini apparently feining normalcy. However, cat was out of the bag.

Realising, Mehar's physical infirmity, Sohini promised that at every dead of night, she would float river with help of strong clay jar to opposite bank and meet Mehar. One night, as Sohini was stealthy venturing out to river, her sister-in-law eyed her and followed. Soon she

learnt the truth. She wanted to teach Sohini a lesson. Next night, she exchanged unbaked jar with similar colours for the strong one. That night happened to be stormy night and the flooded river flowed furiously. Not knowing the unreliable jar in her arms, her feet dragged her with determination to the lover's spot. In the fast currents her jar broke. In this tragedy she started calling 'Mehar', 'Mehar' in an anguish love. Hearing her catastrophic voice, Mehar, in spite being crippled, rose with determination jumped in the swollen currents. He was able to reach Sohini. Holding her in his weak embrace, both drifted down. However, soon both love-birds were submerged by raging currents.

A black foul night, an unbacked jar,
no handy float be here –
She plunges into waves, without
a moment's thought or fear
to her love, river doth appear
a dry and open road.

Leela-Chanesar – Story of female perfidy and greed

This is story of a beautiful woman who loved jewellery and vanity more than her master – as she bartered away her faithful husband one night to her maid-servant for a dazzling diamond-necklace.

About 7 centuries ago Rai Khangar ruler of Lakhpat, now a deadsea port in Kutch (India) had a very beautiful daughter Kounroo who had lost her heart to a gallant and dashing prince Chanesar (1288-1306) ruling in Devalkot who was already happily married to an attractive queen Leela. Leela always loved to deck herself in gold and gems. Kounroo always anxiously awaited at the opportunity to submit and surrender herself completely in the warm embrace of Chanesar and fulfil her life long ambition. She tried all types of ruse to win over prince-charming but was repulsed on every occasion. In a desperation, she became a maid-servant in Leela's chamber and served her with servility and humility. On repeated enquiry from Leela about her background, Kounroo one day broke the silence and confessed her heart to her in most pitiable manner which melted Leela. Immediately, Kounroo unfolded a jewel box and presented Leela a wonderful necklace with dazzling diamonds worth rupees 9 lakhs! Leela was trapped as she could not lift her sight from the glittering necklace and showed her

willingness to barter her husband's company to Kounroo for one night in exchange for the blinding necklace. Accordningly, accepting necklace with shivering hands Leela led Kounroo to the scented bed of Chanesar when he was intoxicated with liquor. Kounroo trembled with desire, her limbs tightening and she prayed for speedy fruition of her wishes.

The following morning, finding strange but an attractive woman on his bed instead of Leela, Chanesar was furious. But knowing heart warming story of Kounroo's undying love for him, Chanesar was enraged on account of fraility and perfidy of Leela. He adopted Kounroo as his wife and gave up Leela. Realising her folly of sacrificing her master for some precious stones, Leela repented and pleaded for pardon. But Chanesar did not relent. Leela cries :

'I lost my heart
on mere stones but,
lost my supreme crown
just for the thirst of eyes,
How foolish I was,
Pardon, my lord,
I rise to be your slave for life,
For a chaste woman
there is no shiner gem
than her 'Suhag', her man!

Once disguised and veiled as a classical dancer she danced brilliantly, in the Chanesar's court.

Every guest admired her art. Even Chanesar, while appreciating, desired to have her glimpse. When Leela lifted her shroud, Chanesar was again bitten by love bug, and forgot her failing. Thereafter both renewed their ecstatic union.

Shah's poetical rendering describes how a lover parted from his beloved with sad forbodings which unfortunately came true. For she broke her vows spoiled her name and incurred the reproach of all.

Rai Diach and Beejal

There was a kind-hearted ruler by the name Rai Diach (1003-1010) who ruled over Junagarh (Saurashtra). He was loved and respected by his subject. He had a sister to whom a son was born named as Beejal. At his birth, the astrologers predicted that he would cause the death of Rai Diach. So while a newborn, an infant was cast away in a basket down the river. As the fate played the role, the babe was picked

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up by a professional musician and was taught intricacies of melodious music. Lo! when he grew up he was – master musician. Another ruler Anirai of the neighbouring state was upset when his eighth daughter was born. He got rid of her by packing her in a basket threw her in a flowing river. She was, however, rescued by a potter who brought her up comfortable and named her as Sorath. The girl grew up a beautiful damsel and many suitors rose to demand her hand in marriage – even her old father Anirai not knowing the facts. But the poor potter, willing though he was, to offer his daughter to the King Anirai discovered that she was already clandestinely courted by King Rai Diach and eventually married to him. This event infuriated Anirai who laid a siege of Junagarh. In a long drawn battle, Anirai failed to dislodge Rai Diach. While withdrawing he announced handsome reward to a person who would bring the head of Rai Diach. Beejal an accomplished musician, decided to try his luck knowing full well Rai Diach being a music connoisseur. However, the court astrologers had warned the King Rai Diach that for 40 days he was under the shadow of evil planets which would cause his death, and better he be away from the sight of outsiders. As a measure of precaution, he was lodged in a fort of Girnar on hills under a heavy guard. Nobody therefore could dare to go up on the slopes of Girnar. However, no restriction was imposed on a musician. Beejal had his musical instrument *chung* from which he played soft and melodious notes below the place of the king. On hearing them, he became restless. Considering that no harm could possible result from mere calling a countryside musician, he therefore summoned Beejal into his audience and pleaded him to play for the remaining 39 nights and give him the benefit of enjoying his melodious music. Gradually the king had intoxicating effect of wonderful music and often in ecstacy, tears would roll down his cheeks.

In the extreme stage of pleasure, the king asked minstrel Beejal to demand his reward. But he declined to do so for the time being. He refused usual type of rewards as could be offered to any musician; jewellery, land, comforts and slaves. He would cynically often reply he could not possibly match the value of any reward with his art. But

when the king persisted in his offer, Beejal promptly demanded his head as the reward. Bound by a word, he allowed his head be chopped off and offered to the musician!

The king said : 'I'll gladly sacrifice,
my head for thee, O Bard,
Although this is a small reward
For all thy music's work
were I to own hundred heads,
would gladly offer without fail.

The King's queens then performed The "Johar"

Umar-Maruee

Numerous mythological and historical Indian stories since the time immemorial enlighten us on the lives of Indian heroines who suffered untold privations and hardships to uphold the ancient ideals of our civilization. They sacrificed their lives for saving their honour, grace and the country.

Often they were subjected to trials of extreme severity. Their warmth of heart, self sacrificing zeal, unassuming loyalty and strength are among the glories of this ancient subcontinent. In fact, their existence helped to civilise the race and upheld the honourable principles. Sita, in order, to prove her chastity welcomed *Agnipariksha*. Sati Savitri's undying love and devotion for her husband weakened the supremacy of Death who meekly delivered her dead husband alive. Gallant Rani Padmini valiantly fought hordes of Alladin's soldiers with handful of loyal Rajputs and protected her honour and liberated her husband from the wily king.

In Malir, a Thar desert hamlet a simple but charming village belle Maruee lived with her rustic pastoral parents. In accordance with the Rajput tradition, she as a child, was betrothed to a young earthy boy Khetsen. Rival and jealous, another village bloke Phogsen had long pined for the hand of Maruee. But he was helpless as the village traditions prevented him from taking any rash act. Out of sheer jealousy, to avenge deprivation he reached Umarket 20 miles north of Malir and sang songs of Maruee's bewitching beauty and magical charms to the ruler, Umar (1355-1390). Phog urged upon the ruler to adopt Maruee as his queen and admit her into the royal ladies chamber of his court. Hearing the juicy stories, Umar was tempted to possess Maruee at any cost- by hook or by crook! He hit upon a ruse and decided to kidnap forcibly the innocent country-damsel and make her one of his queens.

Reaching Malir, Umar disguised as a thirsty foreign visitor, waited

at the site of well where Maruee used to visit with her friends to fill her pitcher with water. As signalled by Phog, Umar approached Maruee, and requested her to quench his thirst directly from the flowing pitcher. Melted at the sight of the haggard thirsty stranger, she volunteered to offer water, while Umar bent to his knees made his two hands in the shape of begging bowl. Instead of drinking water, Umar began to drink the rustic charm of innocent pastoral princess through his covetous eyes and was instantly infatuated by her beauty. In surprise and cunning move, he grabbed the poor girl and carried her to the waiting racy camel. Riding swiftly with the prize possession, Umar reached Umarkot and imprisoned the dazed Maruee. He started pleading with her, offering a marriage proposal, which, of course, honourable heroine repulsed vehemently. He tried all types of soft and violent methods to bring the hapless dame to her knees, trying coercing her into consent!

I will not barter honour for your gold and ring,
Self respect will surpass wealth listen O, King,
Your Court could not tarnish my simple grace,
Woman's character, honour have enriched our race!

But in her determination of rejection, she was firm and resolute. Neither royal luxuries nor delicious recipes could bend her conscience into submission. She was chaste and devoted and had already accepted Khetsen as her lord, master and God.

Stone walls don't a prison make
Nor iron bars a cage,
Minds innocent and quite take
That for a hermitage.

She cried and yearned not only for *Watan* Malir but her poor Khet and simple folks of village. She boastfully announced to Umar that she preferred wild berries, sour cherry, thorny beans of her village to royal luscious dessert. She loved her handwoven rough clothes and quilts more than the gorgeous silken wardrobe of Umarkot palace. In agony of separation from her parents and country-folks, she would touch neither food nor water.

Umar, the king was amazed at the sacred scruples and steel determination of this illiterate rustic girl as he failed to change her mind in spite of his countless persuasions. He gradually began to admire her simplicity, chastity and grace. As the legend has it, the Sindhi ruler didn't forcibly marry her, though it was a common evil-practice of the Delhi Sultans those days to do so.

At every approach Maruee would sing praises of her motherland,

Malir, its *Maroo* and her *Suhag*! Her patriotism for Malir was unquestionable. Umar then reflected to himself that it is an unbecoming of a generous and judicious ruler to play with honour of his helpless subjects. He relented and one day he emotionally addressed Maruee as his foster sister and freed her from the house arrest. Tears rolled down the cheeks of the brave village dame who too affectionately called Umar her *Bhau* i.e. brother! He offered her gifts and safely escorted her to her *Watan* Malir.

The pall of gloom gave way to the festivities on arrival of Maruee at Malir, undefiled. The lovers were united once again and the villagers expressed their gratefulness to the ruler.

Moomal-Mahindra

About 6 centuries ago, Amarkot (Umarkot) amidst the Thar desert was a tiny kingdom ruled by a Rajput Rana Hamir Sumaro. Among his three ministers, Mahindra was a gallant and chivalrous one. About 200 miles north-east of this Kingdom in the vicinity of Jaisalmer (Rajasthan) '*Ladharoo*' on the bank of river Kak, was another tiny kingdom, ruled by Raja Nand, who had nine beautiful princesses, Moomal being more charming and quick-witted, Raja Nand received many proposals from neighbouring rulers seeking Moomal's hand in the marriage. But Moomal was determined to choose her own suitor who could pass her tests – specially braving crossing the barriers of magical palace full of artificial roaring animals and mythical tanks. Many candidates seeking her hand attempted the *Bhulbhulaiyan* but lost the tests and wealth too.

Mahindra, once accompanied with King Hamir, Raja Nand's rival, arrived at *Ladharoo* and heard of the princess's challenge. Hoodwinking Hamir, Mahindra surreptitiously tried his luck to win the desirable damsel. Brave, gallant and intelligent as he was, he successfully emerged triumphantly in all the tests except intelligence test. He agreed to face her harsh interview. (see next story The Princess and the Suitor) Smiling, he strode across to her and was enveloped in her fragrant embrace. Her longing exuded into him, and her petal-soft lips rubbed against his, several times. Both got secretly married. After spending some time with the pretty princess, Mahindra relunctantly left her warm company, promising her that he would visit her every night on a fast

galloping camel. Both of them anticipated happier living through smiling spring, sweaty summer and long nocturnal winter, enjoying the honey-brew of glorious love.

Love and cough could not be hidden for a long time. Hamir got suspicious of Mahindra's nightly adventures, wanted to clip his wings. On the other hand, Raja Nand objected to Moomal's secret romance with Mahindra, a minister of his enemy. He was engineering a scheme of putting all types of restrictions to the nocturnal liaison of the couple. In fact, one night Mahindra's trained and racy camel was poisoned and killed. A new camel was neither swift nor a path finder. It left Mahindra in the lurch. He reached his own destination much later to be admonished by Hamir. Next night as he failed to turn – up at the Kak palace on time, Moomal distraught with the pangs of separation slept with Soomal, her younger sister, who donned Mahindra's attire to please love-lorn sister. She fell prey to sleep after waking up for a long while :

I lit the lamps at the dusk-
To burn till the dawn,
Watched the dark desert path thro' with window,
Sleepless night, waited without a yawn
Return, my Rana, I am dying for you know.

Next day at the twilight dawn when Mahindra disembarked from the docile camel outside the Kak palace, he stealthily strode into the princess's chamber. He was aghast to find Moomal sleeping in the tight embrace of another turbaned Rajput. Angered and anguished, Mahindra , retreated without enquiring, leaving his hand staff (stick) near Moomal as a proof of his visit.

After Moomal awoke, she sighted Mahindra's familiar staff and imagined the sorrowful and unfortunate drama overnight, how Mahindra had been misled by her innocent game. She bitterly cried and cursed herself – for her carelessness which cost her lover. In a desperation she donned a merchant's robe, rode on a fast camel trailing Mahindra's path. She was able to establish contact with him. She invited him to play chess with her. While playing the game, Mahindra accidently recognised her through tell-tale mark on Moomal's body. In a great anger, he withdrew. He refused to hear her entreaties and justification, calling her unfaithful. Failing to win back her disheartened husband, Moomal lighted a funeral pyre and jumped therein to perform '*Johar*'. When Mahindra witnessed this sordid drama, it dawned upon him that his beloved was chaste and untarnished. He too jumped into the fire and gripped burning Moomal in his tight embrace – to unite once again in death.

The princess and the suitor (Moomal – Mahindra)

In an earlier article relating the folk stories of Shah Abdul Latif, we briefly presented one among them, the story of Moomal and Mahindra. Moomal was determined to choose such suitor who would not only succeed crossing her *Tilismi Bhulbhulaiyan* (magical hurdles i.e. false tank, artificial roaring tigers and collapsible beds) but pass her intelligence tests. In other words, her prince-charming should not only be well matched in looks and adventure but also in learning. Scores of candidates, though succeeded in overcoming physical hurdles, had their tails cut off by her clever and embarrassing questions.

After offering Mahindra a brief respite, Raja Nand summoned him in an open court where Moomal would put Mahindra to intelligence test.

Mahindra introduced himself and told Raja he was ready to take the test. Moomal entered to court graciously and glanced at the handsome youth. The court was packed to capacity and pin-drop silence prevailed as the battle of wits began.

"Young man, may I know your name? Moomal asked.

Mahindra – "Lord of skies."

"Lord of skies" – means "What"

"When earthy folks need water they pray to me to send down showers – to green their fields and quench their thirst. Here I am to quench your thirst for immense love."

Moomal blushed and quickly switched over to another question. What are those that should be always together?"

-"Husband and wife".

-"Things that should not be seen together".

-"Day and night" Mahindra responded.

-"Tell me what are the things that are not seen together".

-"Wealth and wisdom".

-"Tell me what are two things that are seen together".

-"Poverty and poet" – Mahindra replied

-"What is it that never changes after one is born?"

Mahindra thought for a moment and slowly replied "The date of birth" – was Mahindra's reply.

"What is that certain to happen in every person's life, irrespective a wish otherwise."

"Death", Mahindra replied.

"Who is a woman's best friend?"

"Her character" Mahindra replied.

"What does it mean?"

"Integrity, loyalty, shyness and dediction".

"And what is man's greatest wealth?"

"His chivalry".

Please tell me the meaning of this couplet :

"The lowly ones but forget
Never the high-born can wait".

Take my reply :

"The lovers are about to part. The
lover takes leave of his beloved
woman, and goes away. His legs
carry him away fast, but his eyes
don't leave her anguished
face and keep gazing. The woman
in tears cries "I remained
slave at you feet which go away
but eyes I never fondled, do not
leave me any longer".

Moomal bowed before the suitor gratefully and was fully satisfied. She accepted him as her lord.

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Padmini of Sindh

The Indian history and the Hindu mythological lore abound in numerous stories of Indian heroines who suffered severe privations in order to uphold the ancient ideals, pristine heritage and culture of this land. They sacrificed their lives for protecting their chastity and honour of their motherland.

Often they were subjected to suffering of extreme severity. Their warmth of heart, self-sacrificing zeal and an unassuming loyalty are among the golden glories of this ancient sub-continent.

Gallant and chaste queen Padmini, thẹ consort of Rana Ratan Singh of Mewar was stunningly beautiful. Ala-uddin Khilji Sultan of Delhi (1301 A.D.) had an evil eye upon her and wanted to possess her. Her husband, Rana, was kidnapped by the Sultan's soliders. By Playing a ruse, she got Rana liberated from the fetters of the wily Sultan. But the Sultan avenged by assaulting the fort of Chitor, carrying fire and sword. Padmini and her maids performed *Jauhar* to preserve themselves from the pollution or captivity.

Similar is the tragic story of simple, docile and unassuming Sindhi damsel, Dropadi, affectionately called 'Sadori' 'an angel of good luck'. She was an adopted daughter of Deewan Gidumal, or Chief Minister in the employ of Pre-British time Sindh Muslim rulers, Mirs. Like many chaste Hindu women, she sacrificed her life to protect her honour, and to uphold the purity of religion.

During the Hindu period prior to 712 A.D., Hyderabad Sindh was known as Narainkote. The Muslim rule continued till the British army under the command of Sir Charles Napier won a decisive battle on the battlefield of Miani in 1843 near Hyderabad. Before the Mir rule, Hyder Kalora had shifted his Sind capital from Khudabad to Narainkote and changed the name of the city, as Hyderabad.

Mirs or Talpur tribe had overthrown the Kalhoras in 1783. The four Mirs were a close knit caucus. Mir Fateh Ali, Gulam Ali, Karam Ali and Murad Ali ruled Sindh before the British captured it. Sir Charles Napier recounts in his memoirs that Mirs were despotic, fanatic and pleasure-loving. The Government administration however, was ably run by Hindu educated and cultured class 'Amils'. They were *Vaziers, Munshis Mukhtiarkars* and *Mukhadams.*

Deewan Gidumal, an Amil, was not only pious and religious

person, but highly competent administrator in the employ of the Mirs. His status was equivalent to the Prime Minister. He was allotted a piece of land near the Hyderabad Qila – wherein Mirs held their Court or Darbar. Deewan constructed his 'Tando' near Sindhu river which later on came to be known as "Gidhu Bandar".

Deewan had adopted niece as his daughter 'Dropadi' affectionately called 'Sadori'. She was not only pretty and humble but talented and well versed in Hindu lore. During those days, the Muslim women veiled themselves and the Hindu women adopted *Purda*. Mir Gulam had heard stories of enchanting beauty of sadori and was eager to steal glimpse of hers. One day he disguised as a woman under the cover of *Burka* entered *Zenana* i.e. women's chamber, of Deewan and could cast covetous eyes upon Sadori. However, the faithful Negro guards of Deewan learnt the treachery of Mir and cautioned Deewan Gidumal.

On the other hand, already infatuated by Sadori's beauty, the Mir was restless and attempted second time to visit surreptitiously to the Deewan's Haveli. However, the Deewan's guards were alert this time. They bet Mir Gulam Ali blue. Seething with the burning desire of revenge, the Mir returned to Qila. Next day, Mir Gulam Ali authoritatively addressed Deewan Gidumal announcing proposal to become his son-in-law. Hearing this announcement, the Deewan almost fainted. With a heavy heart he returned to his Haveli. He anticipated cruel fate upon his family. In spur of movement, he made up his mind to escape danger. One dead of night, the Deewan with family fled to South, Kutch in a big boat through Sindhu river. Hearing this, next day, the Mir fumed with revenge and decided to act deceptively. He wrote an appealing letter to the *Maharao* of Kutch recording appreciation of Deewan's services to Sindh administration, requesting Deewan to forgive Mir's misadventure and return as he would be unharmed. Further that he would assume same royal position in the Government. Unfortunately, the sagacious statesman Deewan was trapped. He trusted Mir's words and returned with his family to Hyderabad by boat.

As soon as he returned to his Haveli, he learnt from his assistant the treachery of the cunning Mir. The Mir was determined to marry his daughter forcibly and execute his all family members thereafter. Deewan's world shattered and earth beneath him almost cracked. He called his elder brother Jaspatrai on the top floor of Haveli and secretly planned a heinous crime upon his daughter asking her to drink a cup of poison, sacrificing her life to save the honour of family and religion. That time Sadori's mother was cutting watermelon and offered her

daughter to taste before climbing up to the top floor. But she obeyed father's order first, and went up. Both brothers, their eyes moistened with tears narrated her the calamity that had befallen the family.

"A little delay will ruin honour of our family and religion" both brother cried. "What is your opinion, my child?" Sadori patiently replied, 'Sati Savitri, Mata Sita, Dropadi and many Rajput women didn't barter their honour and chastity for the pleasure, easy life or gems. I being a true *Arya Nari*, will not put their names to shame. My body is destructive but soul is immortal. Religion is attached to soul. I obey what you order." Both brothers, though pale and distraught, became temporarily proud of their daughter. With shaking hands they offered a cup of death to an innocent and harmless budding damsel of 16. Smiling, she drank it in a same manner as Mirabai drank poison when offered by Rana.

In a few seconds there lay a cold and serene, quite body of tender girl for no fault of hers. She sacrificed her life. Both brothers though, lion-hearted wept uncontrollably. None of them could pacify each other. When the sad news was broken to other family members, there descended a dark mourning spectacle – a pall of gloom!

In a dead of night, her body was consigned to flames near a river ghat.

After a few days, the Mir learnt of Deewan's desperate act of upholding family honour. He quietly plotted to destroy Deewan Gidumal's whole dynasty. One day, no sooner, the Deewan entered Mir court in the morning, than the court's security guards treacherously pounced upon him, stuck the tiger-claws into his bowls and instantly killed him. This lion hearted and pious statesman who had served his rulers faithfully, was cold-bloodedly murdered for no fault of his. Soon his brother Jaspatrai was too butchered by the Mirs. Almost all the members of Deewan family achieved martyrdom.

Such stories of sacrifice and bravery abound in annals of Rajputana but in Sindh this story is perhaps a solitary and unique: A story of daughter of Sindh who preferred death to dishonour. So perished this noble tender girl whose name should always be cherished amongst the noblest of India's daughters.

Honour, and nobility are supreme superior to life and gold,
They are not commodities to be bartered or sold.

Faith That brought tears of satisfaction and showers of prosperity

The ancient Aryans worshipped nature's five elements as they provided livelihood and shelter. Out of sheer faith they invented flattering mantras and deify almost all elements (water god varuna clouds – god Indra). This tradition continued in the Indus valley of Sindh. Early 1938, owing severe shortage of water resulting from scanty water flow in the river Sindhu and complete failure of even limited monsoon, fields in hamlets were parched and brown and the standing crops wilted from thirst. Illiterate villagers of Sultankot, district Shikarpur, were anxious and irritable as they searched the sky for any sign of relief. Days turned into arid weeks. The countryside has come perilously close to catastrophic famine. No rain arrived. Desperately, the headmen of the village approached Bhagat Kanwar Ram to visit the unfortunate village and bless it. The Bhagat consented to pay a visit on a particular day. But he requested that everyone join the prayer on an open field and bring an object of faith for inspiration. At high noon on the appointed day, the villagers turned out en-masse with anxious faces and hopeful hearts. Many among audience were bearers of holy books, flowers and rosaries.

The Bhagat, cool and calm, arrived and repeatedly looked at skies having few clusters of white clouds. Raising both hands to sky, the Bhagat slowly and tearfully sang *Raag Megh Malhar*

You clouds have come, send showers
See roses and lotus are fading away
Garden became desolete
Do rain, give life to plants and flower
Bhoja poet prays, take care of us, helpless

بادل آيو بحار ميان، کر ڪا يار وسڻ جي يار ميان
۱. گل گلابي ڪنول ڪومائا
توڙي چمن چوڏار ميان.
۲. ڪري وسڪارو پر تون باريون
ڪڙن گل گلزار ميان
۲. وڻ سڪا سپ ساوا ڪر تون
ٿين انبار ميان
۳. پوڄل کي نت آس جا آهي
سحڻا لحندي تون سار ميان

The more emotional he became more tears came down from his eyes. When an hour ended, as if on magical command, a soft rain began to fall – and slowly gathering force – an unheard phenomenon even in monsoon-shadow region. Cheers swept the crowds as they held their treasured objects high in gratitude and praise. Many fell at the feet of the Bhagat out of gratitude. Many were with moistened eyes. Amidst the crowd, the Bhagat could see a small girl in a tattered dress held high a handmade ramshackle umbrella – one faith symbol which overshadowed the others. The Bhagat preached the crowd that when you do something in life, have complete faith that you will succeed. It is foolish to do anything half-mindedly. He thanked God and left the impression that faith is a great foundation to build your life. In his inimitable persuasive style, the Bhagat appealed the mass to desist from ill-deeds which had negative effect on the environment. The nature is generous to kind and honest inhabitants.

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The purest way of invoking rain is by song. The ancient rain-making *raagas,* sung by masters, could even move the gods, especially *Indira,* who, riding a white elephant with four tusks, is charged with dispensing or withholding the rains. Two powerful *raagas* are still cited today. The first, *Deepak,* generated such heat that it burned the throat of the singer and caused every candle in his vicinity spontaneously to burst into flame. The second *Malhar,* cooled the singer's throat and brought rain copious enough to extinguish the candles and water the crops.

Abu-ul fazal to Emperor Akbar

"These people of Sindh love their neighbours as themselves; their discourse is ever sweet and gentle, and accompanied by a smile. I swear to Your Majesty, there is not in the world a better nation or a better land, than Sindh.

(Ain – e – Akbari)

Rekhta.com

Sindhi Scholar who translated the Ramayana in Persian for Akbar

During the long period of Mughal rule, (1526-1707), India enjoyed peace and prosperity unparalleled anywhere in the world. India then became the favoured destination for people with extraordinary talent or skill and they flocked to it assured of respective vocation.

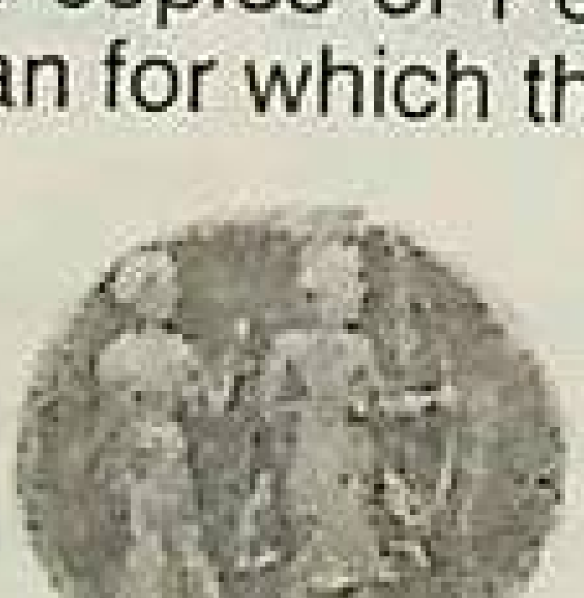
The emperor Akbar had in his court Persian scholars who would often readout to him Persian classics. He was thrilled and impressed by the stories of the eleventh century, Persian classic the *'Shahnama'* by Firdausi. No doubt, his literary masterpiece, enthralled Middle East masses for five centuries. Akbar was forthright ambitious. He ordered his local Persian scholars to select any Indian classic worthy of Persian translation to rival *Shahnama.* After intelligent investigation, the *Valmiki Ramayana* was considered to be the model deserving translation.

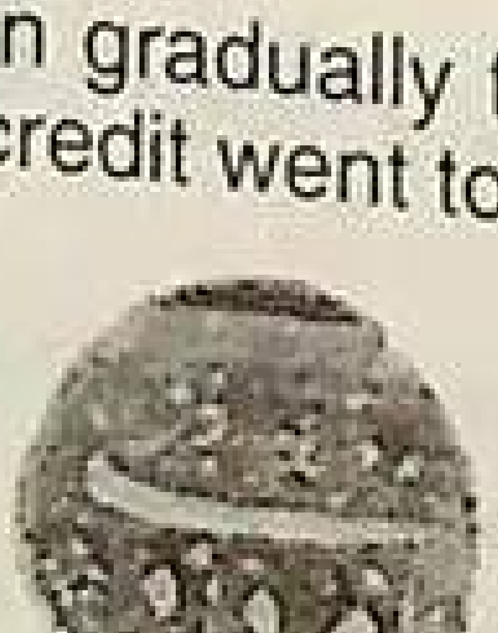
Much before Tulsidas' Hindi *Ramcharitamanas* was completed and popularized, Akbar emperor (1556-1605) had attentively heard, Persian translation of Valmiki Sanskrit epic from Pandit Devi Prasad. He was so impressed by the epic story that he called his Sindhi Vazir Abu-ul-Fazal to arrange its rendering into beautiful Persian language. Abu remembered an expert Farsi scholar Naqeeb Khan of Sayyad family from Hala Sindh. He summoned him to Agra and explained him the gigantic task. Sindhi Farsi scholar and Pandit Devi Prasad were ordered to be closeted for about six months. They were ordered to incorporate with utmost care the serene and rich mythological spirit and essence in the Persian version with illustrations. Suitable living conditions and a make shift temple, and a vegetarian kitchen were provided to the Hindu Pandit – befitting his status. Rahim, a court poet describes that a new book was completed in 1598 with 165 illustrations and 349 folios.

The emperor Akbar was so delighted by the story that he issued coins with the figures of Rama and Sita. Rahim records : This book called the Ramayana is regarded as one of the original and authenticated works of India, containing the story of Ramchandra, esteemed as one of the great kings of India. His gracious judgements and popularity were the manifestation of divine virtue."

It is difficult to imagine that the Ramayana could have had the same popularity in the middle ages as it enjoys today. Later on its Hindi version story by Goswami Tulsidas was accessible to the illiterate masses.

Similarly, the copies of Persian edition gradually travelled to Afghanistan and Iran for which the genuine credit went to the Sindhi Farsi scholar.





Festivals and rituals

The Hindu rituals and ceremonies are actions performed on birth, wedding and death occasions. It would be pleasure to ask Pundits or priestly class to explain *raison' detre* or the meaning and significance of *mantras* associated with the rituals. Pandits try to explain away vaguely or exploit our religious feelings, and lead us astray through one ritual or another. And we live in the belief that we are following that for our sublime life. Steeped in superstition and fear, the rituals throw some vague light on the continuing significance, indeed the rather subversive nature, of myth in our lives. Actually we move away from the real teachings. The *Purohits* became so strong in their organizations that it becomes very difficult to contradict them. However, one should discard what is irrelevant and time consuming ceremonies. Comprehending Sanskrit *mantras* is a difficult task.

Wedding ritual

At the wedding ceremony after the welcome of bridegroom, there occurs the exchange of *varmalas. Var* means best, and as such garlanding that of all the prospective candidates, you were the best.

Later at the marriage *mandap*. The groom eats *madhu – pak* (a combination of honey, pure ghee and curd) which has been offered by the bride's parents through their daughter. "The *madhu – pak* symbolizes three blessings of the parents to the would – be couple : May your family life, conduct and language be as sweet as honey, May you both lovingly mix together and with other, just as pure ghee mixes with food while cooking, and let your marital life be as pure as the whiteness of the curd."

In Hinduism, the one of greatest of gifts one can offer, is the gift of *kanyadaan,* the giving away of the daughter to the bridegroom. While in other gifts, the giver ceases to have any link here the bride's parents do not sever their links, and continue to love their daughter as dearly as before. After *kanyadaan* the ends of clothes of the bride and groom are knotted to symbolize the sacred union.

In Hinduism, the wife is a *sahadharmani* to the husband. This meams an equal partner. No religious function can be performed without the participation the wife, ther by giving her the position of *dharmapatni*, an equal sharer of all religious duties. Manu also says, "Wher women are honoured, the Gods rejoice".

As humans evolved, they started considering certain gifts of nature as sacred, fire being one of them. Hence on this auspicious

occasion, a nuptial fire is set up by burning mango, peepul or sandal wood along with herbs, pure ghee, rice and sweets. This nuptial fire acts as the divine witness to the marriage. To this fire are made five offerings by the groom while the bride places her hand on his shoulder to symbolize togetherness of the act. These offerings represent some duties which both agree to abide by : offering prayers to God; performing *havan* (a ceremony with fire), which signifies keeping the atmosphere pure; looking after parents, grandparents.

While most feel their duty in life is limited to close relatives and friends, the *rashtrabhrit yagna* performed by the would – be- couple, acts as reminder of the obligations towards the motherland and fellow citizens.

Next comes the ceremony of *panigrahana* (pani means hand), during which, the bride 's parents give their daughter's hand in the groom's hand the groom accepting the hand, gives them five vows; he will look after her, help her in good deeds and stop her from bad deeds; fulfil her needs; not hide anything from her and "she will be my only wife".

The bride's brother gives her un –husked roasted rice, which she throws into the nuptial fire and seeks the blessings of Gods. Rice is grown by first sowing it at one place and later uprooting it and replacing it at another place. In the same manner, a daughter is lovingly brought up at her parent's house but later leaves for her husband's home.

Seven rounds about the fire means ability to perform good deeds and attain spiritual growth; prosperity and wealth through proper means; fulfillment of desires and passions and lastly guidance to *moksha* (enlightenment).

Later, the bridegroom applies *sindhoor* (red powder) on the bride's hair In some communities he places a *mangalsutra* around her neck, proclaiming her as a married woman.

If the spirit behind sacramental/nuptial ties is thoroughly understood, there is no need to follow all the rituals. Then a simple civil ceremony would be sufficient. It would save lot of time and money and relieve invited guests from expending their time for long winding ceremony.

Guru Nanak held that the couple would be judged by its deeds alone and not by rituals. Compassion and mutual understanding are the finest rituals. These are two criteria for the lasting marriage Whereas there is no room for comparing irrelevant horoscopes and apprehending *Mangal Dosh*.

Spring

Of all the festive seasons, spring is the most pleasant one. *Basant Panchami* or *Shree Panchami* normally occurring at the end of January or early February, precedes the *Agni Purnima* (Holi) by 10 days. Precisely, it is the 5th day of Hindu *Phalgun* month. Same time *Baisakhi* or harvest time is celebrated in Punjab. In Assam, Bengal, Kerala, it is the beginning of the new year.

As winter ends, spring ushers in, the dull and dry earth suddenly brightens its face and puts a new garb. The delicate pink leaves burst forth that gradually turn into a florescent green. There is an exciting bird activity. The birds sing sweet notes to welcome spring. Buds turn into youthful flowers bearing honey. The restless bees plunge into the flowers and drink deep, sipping honey. The flowers too enchanted, close their petals over the bees ....

Sur Basant Va Bahar – Of Shah Abdul Latif

During the 18th century, Sindh was vast expanse of desert except in the areas around Sindhu river which abounded in thick woods and green foliage. The end of harsh winter didn't usher in cool, cozy and comfortable season there, except in areas of the river banks. Significantly, Shah Latif's *Risalo* among various Surs (Notes), Sur *Basant Va Bahar* contains number of Beyats (couplets) like :

Harsh winter had dried up green
foliage and trees became pale and brown,
Come spring, fruit seeds they bear.
With new lease of life, see the miracles of creator.

In Indian history, Muslims are all too often credited with invasion, misrule and the desecration of temples. What is ignored is the process of cultural synthesis through which Hindus and Muslims have created, over the centuries, a unique composite culture. Surprising as it may sound, for instance, a large number of North Indian Muslims celebrate *Basant Panchmi* just as Hindus do, it is also festival in Pak-Punjab. Basant – the festival of spring – is symbolised by *basanti*, the yellow colour of the mustard flowers which cover the northern plains at the end of every winter.

The 12th century Delhi poet Amir Khusro, desciple of Saint Nizamuddin Auliya introduced Basant quawwalis in praise of coming spring. Communal camaraderie is certainly welcome while celebrating *Basant Panchmi*.

Rakshbandhan

After the end of *chaturmasya* of rain, a festival widely celebrated as *Rakshabandhan* in North India and *Narlipurnima* in Maharashtra. A ritual offering of the *yajnapavitam* (sacred thread) and a coconut is offered to *varuna*. The festival is on full-moon day which signals the commencement of a relatively calmer phase of sea-waves signalling the start of fishing operations and trade sailing. On *Rakshabandhan* day, sister ties *rakhi* around the wrist of the brother with a prayer for his welfare. In return the brother renews his pledge to her as a lifelong protector.

Shraadha

During *Pitri Paksha* or *Shraadh*, which is being observed at the end of *Bhadrapad* (Hindu month) – September-october, The Hindus remember the departed souls. Celebrations and shopping are put off. Offerings of food and other goods are made to Brahmins in the memory of ancestors and their blessings are invoked and prayers are offered to them for general welfare and prosperity. Worshipping ancestors denotes a belief in our constant remembrance of them and our services in their memory, either by following in their footsteps or by seeking their help during distress and misfortunes in our early lives. The wealthy must remember that the spirits of ancestors are pained and tortured if offerings are bought from ill-gotten money.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati, founder of reformer movement 'Arya Samaj' (1851) said that during *Pitri Paksha* (Sharaadha period) offerings given to a Brahamin for the propitiation of the dead ancestors are useless. The transmigration of soul takes place after death immediately. The real *Pitri-Yajna* is the service of the living parents and on their death anniversaries, kind and charitable deeds are appropriate.

The story of Wedding Procession

The Sindhi Hindu wedding in Sindh was colour pageant – almost a carnival. Three days prior to the wedding-day *Dholak* and *Shehnai* players were invited to be seated on *Navar* laced cots. Musicians would commence playing the noisy music intermittently. It was fun watching Muslim *Shehnai* players blowing air into the instrument which would create a sweet melody and two *Dholak* players beating *Dholaks* in rhythm which would cheer the hosts. On the day of wedding in the procession the music players were led by dancing girls who would sing *Laadas* either in Sindhi or Punjabi. Prior to wedding, groom is

called *Lada* and bride *Laddi*. The groom wearing silver *mukut* would sit on a horse. The horse would have been sent by the bride's family. In the memory of grandfather and mother, the coins could be showered on the groom throughout three-to-four mile procession winding through narrow streets till it reached the wedding hall or *wadi*. At that place, an elaborate arrangement was made to receive the *baraat* with honour and humility. The *baraatees* were welcomed with offer of sweets and the shower of rose water. The wedding was otherwise an inexpensive affair. Then the wedding procession was an entire male show.

Processions (*Janj*) formed an integral part of the weddings (pageant procession proceeding from groom's Haveli to bride's home). It must be remembered that Indian marriages are not merely religious functions, but social events too. In olden times, communities were small and everyone was known to everyone else. The procession was an opportunity to involve all the community in a colourful pageant. Any such occasion was celebrated with unassuming pomp and almost all the villagers were served the sweets and *sharbat*. Often, weddings were fixed between the bride of one village and the groom of another. In cases such as these, the whole village would turn out escorting the bridal couple to the wedding hall. The Bengali based movie '*Balika Badhu*' depicts poignantly a child bride taken in a *Palki* followed by masses of the village.

True to tradition, marriage is more than the union of a man with a woman. It is the coming together of families, communities and even relationship. At that time the bride ceased to be an individual or just the child of her parents but became a part of a larger family or community. So too the groom. The communities thus felt a personal rapport and responsibility. The procession was also believed to give those too old or frail an opportunity to bless the couple. As the procession would pass *havelies*, wishes and blessings would be called out to them.

Another angle to the procession was that simple, illiterate bride and semi literate groom were given a royal treatment by all the village. It was their chance to be in the limelight, the centre of all attention. It must be remembered that child marriage was common in earlier times, and the procession would have delighted any child. At the planning of these marriages, the prospective bride or groom had no role. All wedding decisions were taken by the parents of both sides. The children merely followed where they were led. But during the wedding, the attention focused on the bride/groom. She/he was carried through the streets in a burst of colourful pageantry. There is yet another subtle but critical reason for this procession. The belief is that when the bride and groom are led in an open procession, old animosities and hatred were forgotten and friendships renewed among the rival groups. This is one of the

reasons for the open and community style celebration of the wedding itself. It is believed that with the entire community watching the issues that have to be raised and others that do not matter will forever be swept away. Another modern day belief is that making the marriage vows witnessed by all near and dear ones watching the ceremony puts pressure on the bride and the groom to make the marriage work.

Yet the second reason for the procession was safety. In earlier times, processions were not limited to safe city roads, but often had to wind their way across the countryside. The light and sheer numbers were probably an effective deterrent to robbers or even antisocial elements. The size of processions also gave the wedding parties a chance to reveal their status, their financial position and their importance and indirect reminder to the other side!

The earthy glamour of procession is slowly fading away. In the big cities the wedding procession has become almost extinct and gradually it is fading away in the rural areas too. The hosts and the guests are attending the costly wedding receptions sans procession. Nowadays groom is comfortably seated in a car which directly delivers him to the ceremony premises. The marriage ceremony has become a private affair. The ceremony normally doesn't commence until all the terms of exchange of dowry are compiled with. The tribe of noisy music players and dancing girls are almost vanished as the piped music plays at the banquet halls which replace marriage 'Mandap' and shiny bandmasters.

"Divorce' unheard earlier becomes well known. The many splendoured spectacle of earlier procession eliminated the chance of divorce, domestic disharmony and family feuds. Above all, mutual honour and respect exchanged during the moving procession symbolised the unity of two families and left no demand for dowry. Those were the days when mutual love and affection reigned supreme. There was no room for either greed or glamour.

The procession symbolized the culmination of wedding knot. Further ceremonies of seven rounds about the sacred fire or exchange of garlands were a mere formality.

The evil of dowry has made its appearance with the rapid educational progress, globalisation and increasing economic independence of women in the Sindhi community. This has resulted in decline in the frequency of marriage, so is the rising number of separations immediately after marriage – due to dowry demands, mal-adjustment and couples with diametrically diverse views. Surely this is sign of social tragedy. In absence of effective central panchayat, the only way to ameliorate the unfortunate situation is that prominent social and religious institutions and illustrious godmen awaken the society.

Some Indian Wedding Ceremonies

Bride Selection

Groom Selection

Ring

Sindhoor

Tilak

Ceremony

Sacred Bath

Holy Fire

Var Mala

Music

Mangal Sutra

Procession

Sanskrit – a rich cultural heritage

About 1500 B.C. when the Aryans descended on the plains of India from far north of Asia, they were amazed to see serene and magnificent Sindhu river flowing quietly through the lush green forests. While settling on the banks of the river, tasting transparent, pure and sweet waters, enjoying scenic beauty and ever-tranquillity, the wise folks among Aryans, called *Rishis* spontaneously recited *Mantras* in a clear vocal voice in praise of Lords *Indra, Varuna, Sindhu Mata* and *Saraswati Devi.* Their natural voices attuned with luxuriant nature around gave birth to Sanskrit language – the mother of all languages on the bank of river Sindhu. Whatever knowledge our *rishis* experienced within themselves, they gave it out in Sanskrit. Therefore, the script is known as *Devnagri*, the language of the gods because it came as an inspiration of inner divinity. It is the cardinal principle of this language that the spoken or written matter should be bound by a perfect grammar and articulate pronunciation. Else, the right meaning will go a hay wire. The Sindhi language the first *Apabhrunsh*; (corrupted or derivative) language of Sanskrit retained in its roots, the salient elements of mother language.

And for three thousand years, Sanskrit has remained a living tradition : as the common language of India's cultural growth and as a principle vehicle of its thought for much of this period. To know any country or community's culture, we need to know the language that nurtures and protects it. Although, Jews were away from their motherland, Israel, about a century, nevertheless their Hebrew kept them bound with cultural string all over the world. They made it a national language, when they strayed back to Israel in 1948. Though most of them knew better English, they gladly forced upon themselves their ancient mother tongue.

No society can develop unless it values its heritage. If we tear our roots, we have finished the tree. Sanskrit is the root. the enormous spiritual, religious and temporal knowledge is enshrined in four *Vedas*, two *Upanishads*, other Purans, dramas and classical poetry - all branches of the tree. This language also encompasses treatises on law (*niyaya shashtra*), Dance (*nritya kala*), literature and grammar, medicine, architecture, political science, over and above, the knowledge of thought-power, and of the self (*Sankalpa shakti vidya*).

Many Sanskrit text books allude to *Shuniya* – the concept of zero and *Vedic* mathematics – now they are the very basis of the modern mathematics and science. *Viman* or aircraft is commonly referred to in many Puranas. We have lost sight of its method of

construction. The available Sanskrit literature is not in full form. Much of the literature has been burned or destroyed by the invaders. Therefore the auxiliary junior texts which are extant can not take this language to the zenith. Therefore, many things can be learnt by researching and making objective study which can fruitify the results much better than they are at the moment.

European interest :

Most of the ancient civilizations like the Roman, the Egyptian and the Greek declined because of outside invasions. The invasions and onslaughts on India were more pronounced and harsher. In wake thereof, many sacred Sanskrit books written on *Bhoj Patras* were destroyed. But Indian *rishis* and mendicants – *Sanyasis* kept them alive. The *gurukuls* or forest universities catering to few families, however, were the instrumental in preserving Sanskrit. With the advent of the *Madaras* and the convent schools, Sanskrit language has taken a back seat. Unfortunately, Sanskrit is not compulsory in all schools. Paradoxically, the teaching of Sanskrit language is widespread in Hungary, Yogoslovakia and Germany.

During the eighteenth century the western interest in the beauty of Sanskrit literature awakened patriotic zeal of Indian scholars to fathom this forgotten cultural wealth. Raja Ram Mohan Roy of Calcutta was the first Indian whose rendition of the *Isa Upanishad* appeared in 1816. The Germans were pioneers in unraveling the pristine beauty of this language. Max Mueller, indologist, translated a number of Sanskrit tests, the fifty volumes of "sacred books of the east" set the trend to the future research of this divine language. Fortunately, most of available Sanskrit works have been translated into many modern European languages. It is an irony that our link with our own supreme language is through English books. Warren Hastings, the first British Governor General laid a foundation stone for a Sanskrit college in Calcutta in 18th Century.

The predominant link of Sanskrit with scholarship on one hand and with religious ceremonies on the other, has diminished its scope – in shape of wider audience in the country. It is not purely metaphysical nor sectarian. One who doubts its depth and significance should rather look at it in full totality.

Better knowledge and understanding of Sanskrit could correct the prevailing impression about it. The classical Sanskrit literature is not a fairy tale, but a rich glorifying tradition. Not only Sanskrit texts should be translated into the local Indian languages but efforts should

be made to take a reverse direction i.e. translation of vernacular poetry, short stories and mini-novels in Sanskrit. The two way traffic would further enrich and popularize what is called dead or classical language. Only devoted Sanskrit scholars can deliver proper and accurate translation.

Like any other great classical languages of world literature, Sanskrit has its full share of fine poetry, wise and pithy quotes, short stories, drama and prose about human nature. It is replete with inspirational and creative narrative composition of high literary value.

Some ancient Sanskrit writers :

Some of the important celebrated Sanskrit authors and poets through the centuries are as under :

1. Udbhatt : 8th Century writer on *"Alanakar"* (figures of speech). He was the chief Pandit of King Jayapida of Kashmir.

2. Kalidas : 4th Century A.D., the most famous poet and playwright. He was an honoured artiste in the court of Vikramjit of Ujjain. Among his excellent works *'Abigyan Shankutala'*, *'Ritusinhar'*, *'Meghdoot'* find place of pride in world's classical literature.

3. Jaydev : 12th Century Sanskrit poet of Bengal. He composed most charming lyric *'Geetgovind'*.

4. Panjanajali : 2nd Century B.C., the famous author of 'Mahabhashya'.

5. Ban : 7th Century A.D., courtier of Harshvardhan of Kanoj and author of *'Kadambri'*.

6. Bharithri : 2nd Century, author of *Niti*, *Vairaj* and *Shrinagar Shatak*.

7. Shankar : 9th Century, Sanyasi from Kerala, revived Vedanta philosophy – author of *'Sharirak Bhasya'*.

8. Jagannath Pandit – a well-known author during the reign of Shah Jahan. He wrote *Rasgandhar* – a treatise on Rhetoric.

These are some of the Sanskrit literary works. But we shall not forget the epics or Puranas like 'Ramayana' by Valmiki; *'Mahabharata'* by Ved Vyas, Shrimad Bhagwad Gita by Lord Krishna.

Sindh connection :

During Islamic rule extending about 1000 years in Sindh, Sanskrit remained almost extinct in the academic field. It is only during the British rule (1843) that under the auspices of the Bombay University the teaching of Sanskrit through text books was introduced in

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matriculation and Arts colleges. Dr. Hotchand Gurbuxani, the celebrated authority on Shah was one of few Sanskrit students of Hiranand Academy of Hyderabad (1900). In early 20th Century "Shankar Bharati *Pathshalas*" was set up in Shikarpur on the bank of a local Sindh canal. Prof. N. N. Bathija was perhaps the first Sindhi lecturer who joined D.G.N. College, Hyderabad in 1937 when there were only four students opting for Sanskrit. Soon he published "Easy Sanskrit – Sindhi Series" facilitating Sindhi students in their study. Later on, the education department recognised these series as the text books for the school students. Even Pakistan government gave recognition of Prof. Bathija's series. After partition, Prof. Bathija translated *'Panchtantra'* in lucid Sindhi language. (Hindustan Kitab Ghar). Late Nanikram Dharamdas Mirchandani educationist of Hyderabad had published 'Meghdoot' translated in lyrical Sindhi few days before partition. It is heartwarming that nowadays a large number of Sindhi scholars and educationists are well versed in this divine language.

Panini's grammar :

Panini, a 7th Century grammarian of greater Sindhudesh evolved about 4000 rules of Sanskrit grammar and they are so logical and scientific that they closely resemble structures used by computer scientists.

New Role :

Sanskrit is nowadays used for diverse purposes; medical science, mathematics, physics, astronomy and astrology. Indologists in America have reported that Sanskrit is the most suitable language for computer software.

Gradually the Indian educationists and scholars are discovering the full extent and content of this rich heritage – its satirical and comic, erotic and religious treatise. It is satisfying to learn that Pune's Deccan College, 182 – year – old archaelogy and linguistic research institute, began work on Sanskrit – to – English dictionary in 1948 and yet even 50% work is not complete. A colossal task!

'If Sanskrit ceases living, then India will lose her soul!

ADVERSITY AND PROSPERITY

Stars may be seen form the bottom of deep wells
When they can not be discerned from mountain dales
So are many things learned in adversity
Which a common man can not dream of, in prosperity

Hingulaj Yatra

During early days, the religious tours to remote shrines i.e at high attitude, were risky and tiresome proposition. The undulating narrow mountain paths coupled with fury of elements were considered blessing in disguise by the trekking pilgrims. It was believed that more you suffer on the holy route, the more benediction you would expect from the diety.

The Hingulaj shrine in romote hilly and desert area in Baluchistan (Pakistan) attracts mostly Sindhi Hindus via Karachi. Sindh had far few Hindu pilgrimages. During the long Muslim rule and frequent political turmoils and natural upheavals most of the Hindu shrines were either damaged or pillaged. Karachi had a few temples (Cave Mandir at Clifton, Uderolal Mandir at Manora Island, Swami Narayan temple in the city), Kali temples at Hyderbad and Aror a (Rohiri) Sukkur"s famous Sadhubela in midst of Sindhu river wear a deserted look as the saints and the caretakers migrated to India *en-masse*. However, Hingulaj Devi temple in the remote area attracts Hindu devotees periodically.

Shakti Pithas

There are several places of pilgrimage associated with *Shakti* or the mother-goddess. They are called *'Shaktipithas'*. A ritual visit to these places, however, hazardous, is said to confer great religious merit.

The number of such *pithas* is 51 spread all over India, one of them being Hingulaj in Pakistan. The *Puranic* legend enlightens us that *Sati Daksayani* immolated herself in the sacrificial shed of Daksha, her father, since he had insulted her and her husband Shiva. Being inconsolable, Shiva started roaming about the world with the dead body of consort on his back. Acting on the advice of gods, Vishnu started cutting her body with *chakra* so that Shiva overcame his infatuation. Wherever pieces of that body fell, that place became holy *shaktipitha*. One of them, is the place Hingulaj in .Baluchistan, Pakistan, approachable via Karachi.

Prior to partition, Devi worshippers visited Hingulaj from India, Sri Lanka. Tibet and Kashmir. However, the Hindus in Pakistan continue to organise tours to this holy place periodically. Commencing bus journey from Karachi many pilgrims detour first to Lasbella, Famous trading town in Baluchistan nearest to Karachi. The prosperous Hindu merchants of Lasbella proffer all assistance and facilities including priestly guide to the enthusiastic pilgrims.

Proceeding in mortorcade from Karachi in the north west direction the pilgrim – Yatra after crossing Mangopir and Hab-river, has a first halt (100 miles) at Lyari township – a highway trangular junction. (A direct north route leads to Lasbella a mountainous town beyond Khirthar mountains in Baluchistan with population of 1 lakh – agglomerate of Baluch, Khoja (Muslims) and Lassi Hindus. A peaceful trading town has a Hindu temple, a panchayat hall, and a school). At Lyari, the pilgrims have to ready themselves for the elaborate ceremonies enroute.

Lasbella philanthropists and volunteers would have arranged a priest guide *(Agova)* who is expert in the rituals. He always carries a *Chhari Mubarak* (stick). At Lyari rest house, the priest guide gives elaborate mundane and mythological lectures on this sacred journey and requires all the devotees to shed the normal dress and don the saffron robes. The onward journey is either through the desolate desert or hard rock. The distant sinster sight of naked hills or brown hot earth is awe inspiring. But on the way pilgrims softly chant Devi-slokas for the safe journey – (over 10-hour-run) moving continuously – except a shortwhile respite and refreshment. Another temporary halt in the next evening at Kathiari village which is rather transit or refreshment halt, with few cottage-tea-stalls and emergency medical aid shops. Even during next morning journey, the countryside appears highly desolate and isolated from civilization. Soon a wide dry riverbed needs to be crossed over. Owing slow traffic movement on either side there appears some human activity. The guide would inform that river bed was of Phora river – a monsoon river. This river is supposed to be associated with the folk story heroine Sasui who wandered over 200 miles from Bhambore in search of her kidnapped husband – prince Punooh. Then the dangerously fast flowing Phora debilitated Sasui from crossing it towards Ketch Makran. Turning backwards, she reached Pub-chowki where she prayed for death to avoid an evil follower.

Soon pilgrims' caravan would reach Candrakop – a geological phenomenon – salt water boiling lake – on a plateau 300 ft. above sea level. Sea water bubbles out in the lake with mixture of saltish soil and makes a awesome hillock of salt. Led by *Agova*, the Pilgrims would

climb up through dry route and pray for onward safety. Hangol river is about 20 miles from Chandrakop. This river is considered an auspicious and needs a longer halt for a day long elaborate ceremonies. Offering of head hair to diety (shaving of the head) a custom common at many Hindu pilgrimages is required to be observed – by all the pilgrims except married women and spinsters. The bus caravan ends at this outpost as the onward journey is steep and treachorous hilly climb. However camels have been trained to carry cargo load till the top where the Devi Shrine is situated. En route climb, there is Ganesh Kund where Ganesh worship is led by the local priest. The final step is halt at 'Asa Pura' the resting place. Here even camel caravan is terminated. The bare footed 1000 steps climb led by the guide would bring the pilgrims on the mini plateau of Hingulaj Devi shrine (similar to the Himalayan Badrinarayan shrine) where before entering the *'Devisthal'*, it is obligatory to discard temporarily saffron robes and cover the body with the plain white cloth. The leading guide with chhari enters first the Devi shrine and summons 2-2 pilgrims to enter the shrine for the *'Darshan'* and '*Parikrama'*.

After completing the pilgrimage, the tourists climb down a little and pay obeisance to the Gurudwara set by Baba Guru Nanak who visited Hingulaj in the company of wandering sadhus.

Sir T.H Holdich in "The Gates of India" (London 1910) notes that the original 'Hingulaj' idol was carried by a tribe of Babiliayan and worshipped in their temple. The upper half portion of the idol was female and the lower half was fish – tail. Pre – Islamic tribes and Greeks worshipped the idol and named it *Nania*. Even today local Baluchs respectfully call idol as 'Bibi Nani'.

Shah Abdul Latif poet appears to have visited this shrine in the company of wandering 'Jogis'.

SUNRISE AND SUNSET OF LIFE

Pleasant days of childhood came,
which were passed enjoying fun and game,
Fragrant youth boomed, bloomed,
Light soon faded, mirth was doomed,
Remembered the calf love sweet and sublime,
Slowly was lost in the clouds of time,
Winds of love spread the sounds,
Age was advancing by leaps and bounds,
Soon the sun was setting in my west.
Lingering were memories the bad or the best,
On the sands of time, my eyes do fathom,
My failing image now is what I am.

Anon

Who was Raja Dahir?

Unfortunately unlike Islamic and European tradition, the Hindu community or ancient Indians did not produce reliable chroniclers. Most of the ancient Sindh or Indian history is filtered down through the early Arab, later, English travellers and sailers. It is an obnoxious practice that the verification of our own historical events, references and allusions are often made to alien historians.

First recorded Islamic invasion was made on Indian subcontinent, i.e. Sindh by Arab military commander Mohamed Bin Cossim in 712 AD is, on Debal port - cum - temple - town. That time Sindh was ruled by brave, generous and chivalrous king Raja Dahir from Alor - north Sindh. The Arabs conquered Sindh by treacherous and mean methods and inflicted enormous genocide on the innocent inhabitants of Debal, Nerunkot- Sewan and Multan. Besides mass conversion of Hindus, they went on large scale looting and killing spree.

We learn the early Sindh history through Arabic treatise *Chuch Nama*, which is precisely biased against the Sindhis. Arab travelling writers gave rein to the flight of fancy - eulogising the invaders and degrading the defeated. They described Dahir as weak, fun-loving and fickle.

However, later research by the Sindh scholars have unmasked the truth.

Late G M Sayed, patriarch, venerable Sindhi patriot, scholar and the father of the "Jiye Sindh" movement has a different story to tell. According to him, Raja Dahir was not only a brave and chivalrous soldier but a noble patriot who was martyred while protecting his territory.

So great was his renown in war and so upright was his behaviour towards his subordinates that they spontaneously acknowledged his supremacy.

During his secular reigh, different religious sects thrived and prospered. Each sect had own holy shrine. Monastry for Buddists, temple for Hindus, Masjid for Muslims, fire shrine for Parsis.

Mahammed Bin Illafi fleeing persecution and ill-treatment at the hands of Arab Hijaj Bin Yousuf, took shelter in Sindh with his tribe early in 700 AD. Arab ruler asked Raja Dahir to deport the said Illafi. Raja replied: In according to our tradition, any harassed foreigner seeking asylum will get an honourable welcome in Sindh. There was no question of turning him over to you. Raja added that those Arabs who cannot live in peaceful state in oppressive Arbistan were welcome to Sindh.

Treating this retort as an insult, Hijaj through bigot and cunning general Mohamed Bin Cossim dispatched huge army which laid siege to port Debal in 712 AD.

It is learnt that 712 AD attack was not the first one. Earlier, 14 Arab assaults were made on Sindh and on every occasion the brave Sindhi soldiers repulsed them. The saga of Sindh resistance to the foreign invasions in the ancient times was in fact most outstanding contribution.

A false and misguiding propaganda was spread in the Islamic countries that killing infidels and aliens, looting their possession and kidnapping their kinsfolk was *Jehad*. The true Islamic teachings forbade the violet means of spreading the faith.

From a long oppressive Arab rule over Sindh, the local Sindhis were dejected and victims of inferiority complex. Their self respect was marginalised. To curry favours with the rulers, many Sindhi families began surreptitiously to link their parentage to Arab natives and clerics. But subsequent generations realised the folly and began to mend and alter their attitudes commensurate with the composite secular culture.

It dawned upon many Sindhi Muslim Scholars that Raja Dahir was their real hero - who belonged to peaceful and Sindhi sufi soil. That Arabs, though Muslims, were aliens to this holy land. G M Sayed reproached the Arab invaders for their intolerance and misdemeanours and dwelt upon the merits of the Sindhi nation.

Illustrious national hero-Immortal Allah Baksh

The national hero of Sindh, Allah Baksh Soomro, the worthy son of Shikarpur and the scion of honest, hardworking contractor Haji Mohamed Umar was one of the earliest chief ministers of Sindh (1937), when Sindh was separated form Bombay Presidency under the Government of India Act, 1935.

As we learn form the Sindh history, the harmonious relations, existed between the two communities – the Hindus and the Muslims – since centuries, the province was free from any communal tension except some solitary incidents. At the instigation of the British rulers – trusting in divide and rule policy – some bigot, communal Muslim parties attempted to disturb the communal peace. In other parts of India, the non-violent freedom struggle based on the "communal unity" guided by Mahatma Gandhi had awakened the patriotic zeal in Sindh too. The Muslims who were sympathetic and cooperative to this composite non-violent freedom struggle based on the 'communal unity' guided by Mahatma Gandhi were called the nationalists. Allah Baksh in Sindh was one of them being a chief minister in 1937-41. He introduced many agricultural, social and political reforms which gladdened both the Muslims and the Hindus. However, the leaders of separatist communal Muslim party – the Muslim league – were pressurizing Allah Baksh to hitch his wagon to the communal political programme as it was being practised in the provinces headed by the Muslim chief ministers. Even though under the intense pressure, he consented to be sympathetic to their positive programme, but he would not give up national stance, nor disturb communal harmony in Sindh. He had sagacity of a long term vision to transcend narrow politicking in the Muslim majority province. He visualised that with the enterprising mercantile community and the hardworking farmers, the peaceful Sindh could became the most prosperous province. There was a bitter opposition against him. He was firm to plough to his lonely furrow. His little delay in solving a non-issue *"Manzil-Gah-Masjid"* (Sukkur) matter, was a blown out of proportion. This almost cost him bright career and life. A ruined ancient masjid, under disuse, called *'Manzil Gaha'* in Sukkur was being demanded by sectarian Muslim be handed over to them. Little delay in addressing this problem created a great hue and cry. The chief minister had other important issues on hand. But the communal force didn't wait. There were communal riots in Sukkur. The organised demonstrations against him demanded his resignation. However, he

was firm in his principle – retaining nationalist outlook but maintaining a low profile. When elsewhere, the British government adopted repressive measures against the peaceful freedom fighters, Allah Baksh, not only gave up the British title, "Khan Bahadur" in protest, but wrote a strong letter to Vice Roy condemning the atrocities on the peaceful marchers. Treating this letter as an insult from a junior native minister, the governor, on the instructions, asked Allah Baksh to resign from the post of premiership. He refused, arguing that he was an elected representative. However, he was discredited and relieved of his premiership in 1941.

Yet he continued to work for the communal harmony. He busied himself with the social service. When Shikarpur was being inundated by heavy Indus floods, he called hydraulic engineers to divert the fury of gushing waters to his green fields in order to save Shikarpur from being submerged.

While riding a tonga in Shikarpur on 14th May, 1943, he was shot by a fanatic. He died on the spot. Thus he became an immortal.

The grief swept the province, He was a saviour of his town and illustrious son of Sindh. Undaunted, he had braved the slings and arrows of the bigot Muslims. The latter had thrown imaginary pro-Hindu charges against him. His honesty and sincerity were unquestionable. There was a late realisation in the political circles of Sindh, how visionary and positive he was. In his personal life he was above board and fair.

The words not spoken,
Go not quite unheard,
They linger in the ears,
Like wounded fluttering bird.

A gesture of hand.
speaks volumes more than a book,
Echoes hard in the heart,
As if mother earth shook.

If the desert of the world is forested,
with trees of kindness and piety,
It will surely grow and shower us,
With peace and prosperity.

Anon

Emergence of new Sindh Province

(The Bombay Presidency British forces led by Sir Charles Napier won the battle of Miani (Sindhi) (1842) and annexed the prize Sindhi country with the Bombay Presidency. However, by the Government of India Act 1935, Sindh was delinked and it was made a new separate province. The following press release appeared in The Times of India Bombay on 1st April, 1936)

`THE TIMES OF INDIA'

APRIL 1, 1936 FAREWELL SINDH

Today two new provinces (Sind and Orissa) are constituted in India. The Bombay Presidency bids farewell to Sind, which for eighty – nine years has been under the jurisdiction of the Bombay Government. A few years after its conquest in 1842 by Sir Charles Napier, it was tacked on to Bombay, but ethnologically as well as geographically it is much more akin to Punjab than to the Presidency of which it has long formed a part. We have never agreed to the setting up of these deficit provinces because particularly in the early stages of provincial autonomy it is wrong principle to increase administrative expenses. Sind and Orissa are, frankly speaking, luxuries which this country can ill – afford.

Sind has no cause to regret its association with the Bombay Presidency. Much water has flowed down the Indus since Sir Charles Napier, a legend, to have sent the famous message Peccavi. Financially Sind has always been a drain on the Presidency proper, and to that extent Bombay can claim to have been a generous foster – mother of the new province.

It was the Bombay Government which, by constructing the Lloyd Barrage (sukkur) and canals, (1932) laid the foundation of Sind's existence as a separate unit. For that boon Sind has to thank Lord (then Sir George) Lloyd who, with charateristic energy pushed the scheme through, despite discouragements and forebodings. Without the Bombay Government's imprimatur the project would not have received the sanction of the Government of India; without the Lloyd Barrage system Sind could not today look forward to the financial returns which, it is hoped, will in time make it a self – supporting entity. Sind minus the Barrage would have remained largely a desert; its construction makes the desert bloom like the rose and renders possible the Province of Sind as we know it today. Nor must the services of the Bombay Public Works Department be forgotten. Their achievement at Sukkur and elsewhere will stand as a monument for all time.

His Excellency the Governor of Bombay, in his farewell message, referred to the Bombay regime. There has grown up also a strong Agricultural Department to assist the cultivation of long staple cotton, wheat and other products, for which, it is hoped, Sind will soon be famed. Bombay gave to Sind law and order, and the people of the Presidency, with their ready sympathy, have always hastened to help the Sindhis in times of distress. Lord Brabourne has already paid tribute to the assistance which the people of Sind and their leaders gave to the Government of Bombay, while the Legistative Council appropriately recognized the services of the Sind group. To the new province and to Sir Lancelot Graham, its first Governor since the days of Sir Charles Napier, the heartiest good wishes of the Presidency are extended.

Hurs, The Sindh Ultras

Unlike ultras and terrorists who targeted innocent non Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir, the ultras of Sindh-*Hurs* – during British rule (1941-1942) were basically anti-establishment. An illiterate Muslim tribe of *Hurs* in north Sindh for above 1000 years owed alligiance to their Pir i.e., Master Pir of Pagaro based in Peera-Jo-Ghoth, district sukkur. They looted, murdered and maimed innocent villagers indiscriminately: It was officially announced that in November and December 1941, The *Hurs* were responsible for 33 serious offence, 45 murders (including several police officers) injury to 33 persons and 25 cases of sabotage on the railway and telegraph lines. To suppress this serious crime, then Sindhi government arrested and deported the Pir. While in jail (Bengal) he came in contact with other freedom fighters – Bengalis – who kindled fire in his heart against the British government. Thereafter, the crime incidents in Sindh increased by leaps and bounds. These crimes were part of an attempt by these notorious gangsters to intimidate the government into releasing their leader. On return from deportation from the Bengal province, Pir Pagaro incited his followers to act more vigorously and violently against the government by committing offence on the railways. Early, May 1942 Karachi-Lahore Mail was derailed after it left Hyderabad at the dead of night. The *Hurs* looted and killed innocent passengers.

The suppression of the *Hurs* has presented difficulties. Their main hide-out was somewhere in Makhi *Dhand* (Lake) in Sanghar taluka, a thickly forested area of shrubs and jungle with tall and thick grass spread over about 125 square miles, and intelligence about their sabotage plans was difficult to obtain. They had a code of their own by which they recognised each other and a stranger going to them generally courted death. They often disguised as farmers, fishermen or disciples of Hindu and Muslim shrines. When they were cornered they would take shelter in unsuspecting Hindu shrines even at midnight. While offering their obeisance, they would request the hindu saints for food and bed covers. *Hallani Darbar* or *Mehar Darbar*, it is learnt, were often their halting places. They were expert shooters, swimmers and tree climbers, and they could remain under water for a long time.

On the orders of the Central Government, a special force of troops was dispatched to Sindh to aid the civil power in restoring order in the area roughly lying to the east of the Sindhu between Reti, Hyderabad and Mirpurkhas. The force had to take all steps to restore civil security and order with speed.

The complete control of the civil administration rested with the

military commandar major General R. Richardson who declared martial law in the worst affected areas in June 1942. At that time, the chief minister Khan Bahadur Allah Baksh fully cooperated with the military. In order to suppress the terrorists menace, Pir Pagaro was awarded death sentence. Soon peaceful conditions were restored in Sindh. The successors of Pir gradually mingled in the main stream and joined Sindh politics, whereas their desciples continued to rever them as their `*Murshid*'.

The three temples of Uderolal in Sindh

The temple of Uderolal - Thatta

The first river temple was miraculously built at Thatta by Uderolal with a permanent light in it. When Uderolal disappeared from the palace of King Mirkh Shah, (950 AD) the harassed Hindus retured to the Sindhu river for help and to their astonishment they found this temple on the bank of the Sindhu.

Thatta in lower Sindh (Laar) about 40 miles from the Arabian sea and 2 miles from the river Sindhu was in 18th century the emporium of Sindh, a prosperous and popular city. When Portuguese sailers attacked Thatta in 1555 they killed more than 8000 peaceful inhabitants and destroyed by fire the value of rupees 20 crores of gold, after loading their boats with one of the richest loot that had been taken in Asia.

Alexander the great the Greek soldier while returning from Punjab by cruising the Sindhu river (325 B.C.), camped here. Observing good natured and pious citizens, the Greek adventurer named it 'Patalo'. This Thatta is also linked with the miracles of Uderolal, the Hindu Varuna diety.

At Nasarpur - (Hyderabad district)

It is his birth place. His parents built it. When Uderolal grew up he took up its charge and preached the worship of water and light.

At Uderolal - (near Halla - Hyderabad)

Today Uderolal is small hamlet and a railway station. At this site, Uderolal intended to found a temple and wanted to purchase a landpiece from a native Muslim. The Muslim went to his spouse to get her approval, left Uderolal under the blazing sun. But when he returned he was amazed to see Uderolal under the cover of newly grown tree. The Muslim willingly gave free gift of landpiece. Soon Uderolal struck the ground and brought forth dazzling diamonds and offered them to the grateful Muslim. But he was himself swallowed alongwith his house by the ground he struck along with his horse. Both Hindus and Muslim of this village built two shrines on the spot in the sacred memory of Uderolal. Till today lamps are lighted at both the holy places. A fair is held on Chatichand.

19th Century - Shikarpur and Hyderarbad in the eyes of a British Soldier

(Capt. T. Postans, a British army captain and scholar who accompanied marching army from Bombay to conquer Sindh in 1842, published 'Personal Observations on Sindh; The Manners and customs of its inhabitants," (Longmans, London, 1843) has vividly described Shikarpur and Hyderabad (Excerpts).

SHIKARPUR

The principal points connected with Sindh's foreign trade have been its port of Karachi and the mart of Shikarpur, at its northern extremity and in both places the enterprising Hindu is the sole agent by whose means it has been sustained, supplied received, transmitted by tedius land carriage (30 days) from Karachi, reaching Shikarpur. Shikarpur was designated as one of the gates of Khorassan (North Iran) because it is in the direct route of the Indus to that country by the great Bolan pass (near Quetta) which offers the only means of communication.

"We had a large establishment and a considerable force here so long as our armies were beyond the Afghan passes; but on their withdrawal, the necessity no longer appearing to exist, we abondoned Shikarpur. Its position will always give it a direct influence on the trade of the Indus and countries beyond; it shares with Multan the title of one of the Gates of Khorassan, and contains 22,000 inhabitants, according to an accurate census taken by the author, it is walled in, but is in a very dirty and dilapidated state; the large bazaar, for which it is famous, is half a mile in extent, and the walls make a circuit of nearly three miles. A rich country extends for about twenty miles, and then all is a mere desert; and the extent of Sindh is here defined by the territories of the Kilat chief and his predatory subjects. Subzulkot, the last remaining place of any moment, is about 60 miles above Rohiri on the same side of the river the town is a fort of moderate size, but the lands in the vicinity are valuable for their great productiveness, particularly in cotton. The Daodputra country here commences."

HYDERABAD

"Beyond the Indus delta is Hyderabad, the modern capital, built by the Kaloras, the dynasty preceding that of the Talpurs which was now fallen. Hyderabad is advantageously situated in the extremity of a

ridge of limestone hills, which run for many miles parallel to the river on its eastern bank; it consists of a high and very extensive fortification, with a long street or bazaar running for nearly a mile along the crest of the hill. The sea breezes reach Hyderabad, and this, coupled with its situation which is very central, causes it to be chosen as the seat of government. It has an exceedingly picturesque appearance from the river, a branch of which called the *Phuleli* (the dry bed formed the field of the late glorious action) runs close under the walls, and is planted on its banks with some very beautiful gardens. Hyderabad was erected by Ghukam Shah of the Kalora dynasty, on the site of the ancient Nerenkot, famous as being the first for which yielded to the Mahommedan arms on the invasion of Sindh. The fort and citadel were solely appropriated to the use of the Mirs and their families, and here there they resided in independent state and with separate establishments. In Asiatic warfare, Hyderabad would be deemed almost impregnable; but its formidable appearance belies its real strength; the walls are mounted with some heavy pieces of ordinance, and surmount a rocky hill, which has been scraped. In Lieutenant Burne's "Bokhara", there is a very accurate view of the Sindhian capital taken by Captain Grindlay from the *Phuleli* branch of the river; it is about three miles from the main stream. To the westward of the town (which by the way, although the capital is the most poverty-stricken and miserable appearance,), are some beautiful tombs of the Talpur chiefs the marble frameworks in the interior of which have always excited the admiration of the visitor."

A parallel Sindhu River - Mahran

Scholars and historians claim that as the Nile river is gift to Egypt, so is the Sindhu "divine present" to Sindh - being only one perennial water course. However, Col. Tod. the Rajputana historian, records that about 1000 years ago 7 miles north east of Bukkhar island a wider water course (300 miles length), offshooting from the Sindhu river majestically flowed down sourth through the present Kairpur, Sanghar and Rahim-Ki-Bazar (Thar) and entered the Arabian sea near Lakhpat port. This river had sweet water and was called `Mahran'. The countryside enroute was fertile and produced bumper corps. The river mouth at Lakhpat was very wide enabling two sailing vessels to anchor on the bank. A severe earthquake (962 AD) almost buried the river. The upheaval raised the level of Sindh desert preventing the down stream flow. The `Mahran' vanished like legendary Saraswati river.

Prisoner's Miracle

In spite of suffocating and violent Islamic rule in 17th and 18th century in many parts of Sindh, Shikarpur remained comparatively peaceful and prosperous. Owing to its enterprising mercantile Hindu community and flourishing financing/banking trade, many contending Muslim rulers coveted this prize possession. The rulers after rulers, therefore, tolerated free Hindu movement and thriving temples, Among the ruling race, the Afghan kings had long time grip on the town in view of its trade links withe the central Asia and Iran. The East India Company and Punjab's Maharaja Ranjit Singh were too eager to grab this gold mine.

In 1737, Iran's cruel and aggressive ruler Nadir Shah was returning with irregular soldiers after looting and killing spree in Delhi and elsewhere. He had taken hundreds of *Brijwasi Brahamins* as prisoners. While he was crossing Shikarpur, his territory, *en route* to Kabul, the Shikarpur Hindu *Panchayat* prayed the ruler to release the captured *Brahmins* and women in exchange for substantial money and gold. The illustrious Sindhi historian Berumal Maharchand notes in the `History of Sindh' that Seth Harchandrai Vishindas, another philothropist offered huge financial contribution for the noble cause. Among the freed prisoners was one Maharaj Shamdas. With his divine light, he located a sacred picture of Lord Narsingh near the Sindh canal. He consecrated it and built a small Narsingh temple. The evening *Aarti* prayers with ringing of bells attracted many devotees. But the Muslims offering Namaz in nearby Masjid were disturbed and requested the Maharaj to stop chimming of the bells. Innocently, the Maharaj ordered the Masjid to shift away form the temple site. Lo ! to the astonishment of every beholder, the Masjid slowly moved away on own about 100 feet from the temple. That time Nadir Shah's successor, Ahmed Shah Abdali was also ruler of Shikarpur and had seat of his power in Kabul (Afghanistan). When he heard of this miracle, he marched down to Shikarpur and witnessed the site. He personally congratulated the Maharaj on his divine powers, confessing : "The living creatures obeyed my orders but the lifeless stones followed your directions. "The Maharaj was amply rewarded with the property in Kandhar. The Maharaj built a small temple there. He also found Dharamshala and Sindhi market in Kandhar.

Importance of Sehwan or Sewistan

Major General Cunnigham, British explorer underlines in "Geography of Ancient India" the importance of little town Sehwan. It is well situated on the elevated plateau on the western side of the Indus. It alluvial soil is suitable for the copious cultivation of grains and cotton Thirteen miles north, one spot called Lucky or `Dhara Tirth' a place of Hindu pilgrimage has a shiva temple and cool and comfortable caves. In his opinion Sehwan is more ancient than the settlement of Mohen-Jo-Daro. The human skeletons in the area are considered to be prehistoric relics. A cave in a old hill near Sehwan station is called a "Single Pillar" is found to be suitable for human living. A mythological story describes that at the time of Brahma's superiority it was a favourite local for religious suicide - to get salvation (Nirvan). The mountain caves are so cut-out that they could have been well suited for ancient dwelling or meditation. The Arab soldiers under Mohamed Bin Cossim, after capturing Debal and Nurunkot (712 AD.) marched to this prosperous township. The town's ruler surrendered under the sway of the Arab swords.

Earlier, Alexandar, the ancient Greek King, sailling through Indus river form Punjab enroute to Persia in 326 BC, camped at Sehwan and established a fort - its ruins are still visible.

Sehwan is also associated with "Shahbaz" or "Mast kalandar Shah's" shrine. An annual fair in the memory of the Sufi *Fakir* attracts huge crowds.

`*Kalandar*' means, a mystic - a sufi - who works out his own salvation without the guidance of a spiritual master.

EVERYTHING

Everything comes to an end except hope.
In the darkness it is like a climbing rope
Everything becomes old except money,
Everything becomes old except money,
In riches or adversity it is sweet as honey.
If you have the habit of waiting for others
You will get left behind and no one bothers

-0-0-

Love furnishes the pride of those
whose hearts are truly humble
Makes every grain of sand a desert,
every drop a sea.

Sun Temple of Multan

It is to the credit of early Aryan settlers who appreciated the value of eight natural elements. Among them, the sun received the special mention. As the sun moves towards the *Uttarayan* (north direction – summer solitice) on every 14th January approx. the day is considered the most auspicious in a year. Its movement is from tropic of capricon *(Makar)* to tropic of cancer *(Kark).* The new configuration lends a touch of warmth to the mother earth. The seeds that lay dormant, thus far, for want of heat, now sprout-forth with the help the sun's energy (called photosynthesis). In religious annals, the sun god enjoys a uniquely high rank. For that reason it is worshipped with great devotion. The hero of the *Mahabharata*, Bhishma was given a boon of being able to choose the moment of his death. He chose, the *Uttarayan* day. Till that day he lay on the bed of arrows. In some passages the *Rigveda,* the worshippers wished the rising sun to declare them sinless. Sun was adored as the bestowal of riches, food and removal of sins.

According to 19th century noted Sindhi author, Mirza Qaleech Beg, the size of Sindh prior to Arab conquest, was much larger. The greater Sindh had absorbed Kashmir and Kandhar in the north, Makran in the west and port Surat in the south. This was the position in the reign of Raja Dahir ruling from Alor.

The most celebrated Hindu shrines in the 7th AD century, were Somnath (Gujarat), Vishwanath (Kashi), Mathura (Krishna Janambhoomi) and sun temple of Multan (extreme north of Sindh), (now Punjab, Pakistan). The temple was dedicated to the sun and was very magnificient and profusely decorated. The image of sun – god was cast in gold and ornamented with rare gems. The female dancers would play music, light temple lamps, offer their flowers to honour it. The kings and high family members never failed to make their offering of jewellery. They had also founded a clinic, nursing home and a rest house which provided medicines for the poor and sick and affording succour and substance to the poor pilgrims. Men, women and children from all the surrounding countries visited and offered their prayers.

One Samba warrior was said to have been made king of Multan after he defeated Bana – the *Asura*. When afflicted with leprosy, he retired to the *Mitra-vana.* By fasting, penance and prayer, he acquired

the favour of *Surya* and was cured. As a mark of his gratitude he erected a temple in which he installed a golden statue of sun-god, and founded a city called Sambapura (Multan) on the banks of the Chenab. As no local priest was prepared to look after the duties of the temple, Samba went to Sakadvipa and brought eighteen families of *Magas* (*magi* of ancient Persia) to serve the temple. One of the former names of Multan was Sambapura and the Hindus of the place celebrated a festival in honour of the sun called *Sambapurayatra*.

Incidently another sun temple fact east was built up 1200 years later in Bhubaneshwar was meant for royal family. The virtue architecture of the temple is that the throne in the centre would catch early morning rays first. Story goes that whoever sat on the throne on the *Uttarayan* day to catch the first sun-rays would be blessed with a male child. The sun temple of Multan had tall sun idol with brilliant red rubies facing east. The first morning rays would hit the rubies and red reflection therefrom would brighten the whole temple.

In 713 AD, when Mohammad Cossim, an Arab invader, captured Multan, he robbed the sun-temple of its golden image and immense riches. The Arab general heard that, in ancient times, Jibawin, a chief of the city, made a reservoir on the eastern side of Multan in the middle whereof, he built a temple and an underground chamber in which he concealed 40 jars each filled with gold. Over it there was a temple with an idol made of red gold. When Mohammad Cossim entered the temple,he saw there an idol of gold, and its two eyes bright with red rubies. Mohammad Cossim thought it might perhaps be a man, so he drew his sword to strike it, but the priest said, "O just commander, this is the image, which was made by Jibawin, king of Multan, who concealed the treasure". Mohammad Cossim ordered the idol to be pulled up. Two hundred and thirty tons of gold and the image of the temple were dispatched by boats to Arabia, after a loot.

The temple of Multan used to receive rich presents and offerings and to it the people of Sindh resorted as a place of pilgrimage. They circumambulated it, and shaved their heads and beards. The Arabs found Multan so rich that they called it "the Frontiers of the House of gold".

After Arab's depredation of the temple, a wooden idol replaced the golden image to beguile the superstitious Hindus to offer the contribution. The inhabitants of Sindh and India which continued to perform pilgrimage to it : they carried money, precious stones there to fulfil their vows. The greatest part of the revenues of the generation of Muslim kings of Multan were derived from the rich presents brought to the idol.

The settling rulers learnt that this idol was the cause for visit by pilgrims for all sides. Therefore they thought it best to have the idol where it was. Nearby a mosque was built.

Not very long after the French traveller Tavernier's visit to India, this celebrated ancient shrine was destroyed by Moghul bigot king Aurangzeb (in 1700) and Jama Masjid was built on the site.

It is a great tragedy that earlier Sindhi Hindus were superstitious and swayed by blind faith in idol worship though it was defiled and destroyed from time to time. This was the fate of Somnath and Mathura shrines. Even today, the blind faith drives superstitious Hindus to make offerings of gems to the idols when chances of the theft are common.

HAPPINESS

Happiness is an unspeakable feeling,
Being a touch of joy which is healing
It is the satisfaction of mind like reading a book,
Or in a way you admire a good look
Without expectation, like performing a kind deed,
Or going out of way, helping a needy indeed
Or remember the carefree days of laughter,
Or few words of sympathy you barter,
It is a state of mind without measure,
It comes in many forms here, anywhere.

Public Bath at Mohan-jo-daro

Rekhta Download.com

CHACH-NAMA–EARLIEST SINDH HISTORY-RECORD

In the story of Raja Dahir in this book, we were pained to point out that the ancient Hindu community or Indians did not produce reliable chroniclers. Even the exact dates of birth and death of Hindus gods and goddesses are not known even though their births are celebrated on particular dates e.g. *Ram Navmi, Janmashtmi, Hanuman Jayanti.*

'*Chach-Nama*', the earliest history of Sindh is a Persian version of a Arab history composed not long after Mohammad Cossim's conquest of Sindh (712 AD). The original Arabic work is lost but the Persian translation which has come down to us was written early in thirteenth century by one Mohammad Ali Kufi of Uchh (near present day Multan). The *Chach-Nama* by Mirza Kaleechbeg is a complete English translation (1900). Besides a main record of the Arab conquests, the *Chach-Nama* in its earlier portion describes Sindh when it was ruled by the Hindu rulers and takes us back to the closing years of fifth century. There are two more chronicles of Sindh : *Tarikh-e-Masumi* (1600 AD) and *Tuhfat-ul-Kiram* (1768 AD) which gave a fairly good account of the Hindu reign and lately the Muslim conquests. Unfortunately these three chronicles are the main sources of the ancient history of Sindh two centuries prior to the Muslim rule.

According to the *'Chach-Nama'*, we learn that powerful kings of the Rai dynasty, with their capital at Alor, on the banks of the Sindhu, ruled in Sindh for a period of 137 years.In 622 AD, when Sahasi II, the fifth, and last king of the Rai dynasty, died, his talented chief minister, a Brahmin, named Chach, who had "won the confidence of the Rai and the more tender regards of the queen", seized the throne and proclaimed himself king. He married the widowed queen who bore him two sons, Dharasiah and Dahir, and a daughter named Bai. Mahrat, the ruler of Chitor, who was a brother of the deceased Rai, marched to Alor to claim the inheritance, but he was killed by Chach, in a single combat. As the royals in the kingdom were not disposed of to acknowledge the usurper, Chach had to undertake prolonged campaigns against them in all the parts of his dominion. When Chach died, after a prosperous rule of 40 years, the sovereignty of Sindh devolved on his brother Chandar, who professed the Buddhist faith. Chandar reigned for 7 years. After his death Dahir, son of Chach reigned at Alor, while Dharasiah established himself an independent ruler at Brahmanabad, the Lower Sindh. Thirty years later, when Dharasiah died, the entire kingdom came under the sway of Dahir. Then, in 710-11 AD, began the Arab invasion of Sindh under Mohammad Cossim; Dahir was killed in the fighting near Rawar in June 712 AD, and by the following year the conquest of the kingdom by Arabs was complete, and the entire country from the port of Debal to Multan passed into the hands of the Muslims.

Some historians lament to note that in an encounter with the Arab invaders there was lack of strategy on the part of Dahir and the

treachery of the Buddhists of the South. All important chiefs seemed to have deserted his cause. This is partly accounted by the superstitious notions according to the Hindu *shastras* that the Indian sub-continent was destined to fall into the hands of Muslim, and it was therefore futile to fight. But the attitude of the chiefs was perhaps due to personal ill feelings against Chach and descendents who usurped the land of Sahasi – the rightful king. The kingdom of the Rais which seized comprised not only Sindh itself, but also a large part of the eastern Punjab and Baluchistan. The four important States on its borders were Persia, Makran, or Zabul (Kabul), Kashmir and Kanauj.

'The Chach-Nama' makes several references to these kingdoms. They throw a sidelight on the political arrangements in North-west India in the seventh century AD.

'The Chach-Nama' mentions that Chach snatched back Makran and Kirman (Baluchistan) from the Persian king. Similarly, Harshavardhana, a powerful and wealthy king of Kanauj (607-647 AD) was contemporary of Chach. Chach is known to have captured Multan and reached on the borders of Kashmir. The chronicle refers to the the engagement (later marriage) of Chach's daughter Bai to Sohan, king of Batiah (Zabul or Kabul). The marriage took place when Dharasiah and Dahir ruled independently at Brahmanabad and Alor respectively. The astrologers had warned Dahir that Bai's husband was destined to become "King of Hind and Sindh", so he himself took her as his wife. Later on, after the Arab invasion, Chach-Nama is mostly concentrated to Arab conquests and the recall of Mohammad Cossim to Arabia and where at Khalifa court he was ordered to be beheaded.

Sindh and Sauvira

Sindh and Sauvira are mentioned in the Mahabharata as two States of *Bharatvarsha*. Both were part of the areas which formed present day Punjab and the upper Sindh. The Mahabharata refers to Jayadratha as king of the Sindhu – Sauvira as both the States fought on the side of *Kauravas* at the battle of Kurukhetra. The Ujjain poet Kalidasa in 'Raghuvansha' versifies that Rama gifted his brother Bharata, the Sindhudesh; the latter conquered Gandhava (Kandhar) and Taxila, thereafter.

There are many conflicting opinions about the situation of these two States. However, Sindh comprised roughly the present day modern Sindh while Sauvira embraced districts around and above Multan.

Miracle or Mythology

If you happen to visit Aurangabad, an old Islamic and historical city in Maharashtra, you will not miss to glance Panchakki – a mini wonder. Baba Shah Musafir (1744 AD) a wandering ascetic had settled in this drought prone area. In absence of supply of water around, he directed his desciple Hazrat baba Mahmood to dig earth at particular spot. He did. Lo ! copious water sprouted with the giant force. Innocent faithful inhabitants thought it was a miracle of *Darvesh*. The water was diverted through the underground channel to the present spot of Panchakki. The underground stored water forcefully rotates grinding wheel set above the cistern. The abundance of water is used for multiple purposes. The later architects considered this phenomenon of a professional diviner – who located underground water – rather than a miracle.

There is another miracle story in the Mahabharata, when queen Kunti courtesan of Raja Pandu recited special *Mantra* gifted by Sage Durvasa, the sun god appeared before her in the human form – a temporary lover. Through him she bore a male child who, when grew up, happened to be an extraordinary brave and noble called Karna. Miracle?

In 19th century early 20th century, the small hamlets in interior Sindh abounded in numerous miracles ascribed to many saints and *Pirs*. Many stories floated about their supernatural powers and performance of miracles like dead bodies brought to life by sprinkling of holy water, infertile women becoming pregnant by eating holy fruit, ghost exorcised by chanting *Mantras*, unemployed youth landing lucrative job etc.

In pre-British time, the lack of education, scientific knowledge and enquiring-mind blindly led the faithful to their chosen gurus and godmen who were themselves neither educated nor aware of their desciples' biological weakness or other infirmities. Sindhi godmen, astrologers, palmists might not have been frauds but surely they played upon the superstitious mind and with their soothe-saying, they did enlarge the confidence of their anxious disciples. However, godmen and godwomen are still there now. But they can't perform miracle nor their followers would trust for they firmly believe it is impossible.

The story goes that in Rohri Sindh a shrine called *Assa-o-Tar* (fulfillment of wishes) on the bank of the Sindhu river pulled thousands pilgrims like magnet. They were pulled by blind faith expecting miracle to happen in their lives. Some pilgrims were fortunate. As a result of

partition in 1947 the wishes of many remained unfulfilled. They fled their homes and hearths post haste to avoid violence.

While promoting relationalism and the scientific temperament, Late Dr. Abraham Kovoor, the rationalist of Kerala (1955), stated that India is full of superstition and of feeble-minded people — and that nobody ever had supernatural powers and they existed in the pages of holy scriptures only, and sensation – mongering newspapers spreading the rumours. It is true all those who claimed to possess or displayed spiritual powers were either frauds or mere well wishers. He even challenged anyone to demonstrate supernatural or miraculous powers or astrological forecast under fraud-proof conditions. He also challenged semi-qualified self appointed health advisors propagating healing without medicines or without scientific observation. If any devotee succeeded in getting his desires fulfilled with the blessing of his guru, he presumed it was miracle. However, a true guru would dispel this misgiving by clarifying that achievement was due to a good *karma*.

Guru Nanak as a true guide, spoke of positive miraculous results from the good and noble acts accompanied with sincere prayer and he further declared that the honest guru directs us to the right path that itself is a miracle. He has no power to change the destiny of his disciples.

Muhurats

Astrologers claim that favourable planetary configurations called '*Muhurats*' can be used while making money/matrimony decisions. What astrologers say :-

The founding pillars of *Muhurat* are the Moon and the *Nakshtras.* The Moon is considered the primary planet in Indian (Vedic) astrology. It is said to represent the human mind and also has the speed of human thought. It changes a zodiac sign every 2.5 days. It is the fastest moving planet in the nine planets of *Jyotish.*

Nakshatras are the congregation of stars that can be seen in the night sky. Though there are many congregations, for the purpose of Muhurats, we consider only the 27 *nakshatras* of *Jyotish*, starting from *Ashwini* and ending with *Revati.*

The *Nakshatras* are also called the Lunar Mansions as the Moon stays in one *Nakshatra* for roughly 1 day.

Depending on the nature of the Nakshatra and the day of the week, the best *Muhurat* is fixed.

Some general guidelines about *Muhurats* with respect to money matters are :

1. One of the best *Muhurats* for commencing all sorts of monetary activities is the day of Dassera.
2. People tend to avoid commencing any new venture on day of *Amavasya* (New Moon). Some communities also avoid all commercial activities for the 15 days prior to the first day of *Navratri*. This priod is also called "*Shraddha*".
3. For wedding aspirants:
   It is the Moon's position that determines a *Shubh Muhurat*. For example, the period of fifteen days (from the time the moon begins to wax upto the full moon day or *Puranmasi* is known as *Shukla Paksh* and is considered auspicious. Similarly, the next fifteen days upto *Amavas* (or new moon day) called *Krishna Paksh* and not considered favourable for conducting any important event. The *Shubh Muhurat* for any auspicious occasion starts from *Kartik Purnima* onwards.

In spite of acting according to the *Muhurat*, destiny plays its own role benefiting or damaging.

Some Mythological terms which were invented by the Sindh Seers

Durga : "That which is difficult to attain"- the state of liberation after the destruction of ignorance and all non-divine qualities.
Kali : *Bhadrakali* and her various names are the different aspects of primordial *shakti*. *Bhadra* means safe and secure. *Kali* is the female counterpart of *Kaal* or time. By worshipping *Bhadrakali* we progress beyound *prakrit*.
Vijaya Dasmi : the tenth day progressing from darkness (new moon) to light (Full moon) symbolises the victory over the ten sense-organs.
Sattva, Raja and Tamas
These three qualities are born of nature, tying down the imperishable soul to the body. *Sattva* is white the colour of purity worshipped as goddess *Saraswati*. The colour of *rajas* is red, represented by goddess Lakshmi i.e., passion, ambition, the source of thirst for physical pleasure. Lakshmi bestows on her devotees the immense divine wealth *(Daivi sampati)*. *Tamas* is black i.e. mother Durga is worshipped as goddess Kali. A *tamasic* person acts under the compulsion of the body. He has no power of judgement. Then we pray to mother Kali, as Durga, the terrible, as Supreme, Power, who should destroy our impurities, our vices. She fights them and destroys them after our intense worship.

Taming of Ahmed Shah Abdali

It was Ahmed Shah Abdali (Durrani) ferocious Afghan invader who defeated the mighty Maratha army in the 3rd battle of Panipat in 1761. In any war, his savagery was unparalleled. But prior to Panipat battle, the Sindh ruler Noor Mohamed Kalhoro was owing allegiance to the Afghan ruler and was contributing to him token amount (*Nazrana*). As ruler's capital (Hyderabad) was hundred miles away from Kabul, the Sindh ruler conspired to suspend the dispatch of contribution and attempted to be fully independent. Ahmed Shah Abdali got the wind of this conspiracy and the Sindhian change of heart. With a large number of fierce irregular soldiers, he descended on the plains of Sindh with a cyclonic speed and struck terror en-route like a killer – lightening. He camped at Noshahiro Feroze (Nawabshah Dist.) in 1755 and arrogantly summoned Sindh ruler to surrender with rupees twentyfive lakhs penalty. The scared ruler Noor Mohamed fled the capital Hyderabad to Jaisalmer. It was left to his loyal Hindu Vazier Dewan Gidumal to face the wrath of the marauders. This Dewan belonged to illustrious Amil community celebrated for their culture, erudition and statecraft. This humble Dewan accampanying unarmed cavalry carrying many heavy boxes presented himself before the angry Pathan ruler at his camp.

Apparently satisfied with the loadful of *Nazrana* from the Sindh ruler, the raider ordered the boxes to be unlocked. To his surprise in place of jewellery and cash, he found all the boxes full of dust and moistened soil. His eyes blazing, seething with anger, he exclaimed, "What?" The erudite, Dewan in his all humility speaking in chaste Persian, submitted, "Lord! Our Sindh abounds in pious sages and *Fakirs*. We respect the dust of holy shrines and *Durgahs* as treasure – the dust frequently enriched by the touch of steps of holymen. Every Sindhi would worship the path that is imprinted with the footprints of sages and mystics. The constant shower of blessings of our Masters keep us contented with whatever we have and we desire no more!"

Sage who woke up whole night and prayed,
His soil, Latif says, with respects paid,
Hundreds would throng and salute,
Even the stone on which he sat.

ساري رات صبحان جاڳي جن ياد ڪيو
شاه عبدل لطيف چئي تنجي متي لڌو مان
ڪوڙين ڪن سلام آڳھون اڃي انجي

Thereafter the Dewan quoted in beautiful Persian several mystical couplets of ancient Persian poets : Rumi, Saadi, Firdousi and Sherazi to drive home his point of view, eulogizing the greatness of sufi-saints. Highly impressed by sublime and subtle submission and appreciating glorious Sindh traditions, the harsh invader calmed down and congratulated the Dewan on being a son of sacred soil as well as on his Persian oratory.

He ordered his army not to accept any gifts and presents from the rulers of the land whose subject treasures the soil of saints more than gold and gems. "If you respect so much the soil of holymen then what would be the pristine nobility and purity of *Darveshes* of this venerable land!

The Dewan then in his all humility pleaded to the raider to show mercy to captured innocent men and women in the name of Allah.

The wisdom and humility of the Hindu Dewan carried the day as Sindh was spared of tragedy of massacre and destruction. The invader returned with his vast army without firing a shot or committing depredation.

Unfortunately he was the same Dewan who was mercilessly butchered about 10 years later by new Muslim ruler Mir Gulam Ali as Dewan discarded Mir's demand for the hand of his daughter.

Contentment and Discontent

"My mind to me a kingdom is,
Content it is with happiness;
Your mind to you can bring no bliss,
Since discontent it doth possess.

Though a Crown, you are, but poor.
Though lean is my purse, I am a king,
You, ever, wish for more and more;
You will cry, but no sorrow I sing.

With few desires I have no grief,
No worldly flashes can be distract
You still are upset like a running thief,
Earthy woes have your soul hacked.

Sindhis and Sindhi Language

Proud Sindhi Hindu community, heir to the Indus valley civilization, losing everything at the time of Partition (1947) managed to bring one thing : a motley blend of Sindhi culture : "Shah Jo Risalo" (Shah Abdul Latif), *"Sami – a – Ja – Sloka"* (Chainrai Lund). "Sachal Kalam" (Sachal Sarmast) and the Guru Granth Sahib, plus memory of some august traditions, celebrations of new year on *Chetichand*, and Guru Nanak *Jayanti*. However, uniform mores and customs in this casteless society accompanied by a quality of business acument resulted in the quick settlement.

Besides this community being heir to Indus valley civilization, (Mohen - Jo – Daro), the early settlers on the Sindhu river (2500 B.C.) and later frequent migrant communities from the Central Asia mingled with local people. That term Hinduism was not known,but the existence of social customs, Vedic values, idol worship and beliefs in the natural elements became the refuge and spiritual goal of unnumbered millions. Without specifically calling settled community on the banks of the Sindhu as 'Hindus', it adopted, in general, certain conduct which was called Dharma. What was 'Dharma'? "The religious rites, ceremonies and observance of the fixed principles of conduct, privileges, duties and obligations of a person depending upon his stage of life and status in society, even rules of law, customs and manners of society".

Upto the time of Islamic invasion (10th century), this system Hinduism absorbed all those of whatever race who came to the *Sapta Sindhu*, the land of seven sacred rivers, and so thoroughly too, that they became its strongest champions in its hour of need. It has upheld philosophy which for boldness of endeavour and keenness of analysis stands high among the achievements of human intellect.

After the Islamic onslaughts, the Hindu religion appeared rigid and hard with the sole intention of safeguarding its values. The ceremonial and symbolic rituals were strictly followed.

Sindh was the earliest victim of Islamic aggression i.e. 712 A.D. which resulted in mass genocide of Hindus and later their forcible conversion to Islam. Since then the remaining Sindhi Hindus were a minuscule community, for their very survival they buried their differences, grouped themselves into certain classes. During the Muslim rule, the Amil, (educated) were bureaucratic class. In extreme north, Shikarpuris were moneylenders and cloth merchants. They established their trading outposts in farflung Muslim states. The *Bhaibands* were class of traders from lower Sindh who built overseas business empires mostly in the far east. The left over minority section i.e. Brahmins were occupational priestly class who administered the nominal rituals and ceremonies

against elaborate long winding ceremonies in other parts of India.

In absence of temple towns, the pilgrimage from Sindh to distant holy places like Mathura, Haridwar or Kashi for birth or death ceremonies was out of question. Hence the Hindus of Sindh specially of Laar (South) used to visit Lakhpat (Kutch) by boat for onward short camel journey to nearly two Kutch temple towns i.e. Narainsarovar and Koteshwar for the ceremonies associated with child birth, death and thanksgiving on accomplishment of wishes i.e. *Manat*.

Sindhi Language

There is a general commendable opinion about the Sindhi community : one of the most enterprising in the country. But the community is grappling with the problem of survival of the Sindhi language of survival of the Sindhi language. During pre – British era this language as such had no fixed form or script – Devnagari or Arabic. During the British rule, two British scholars holding opposite views, Capt Stack supporting Devnagari script and Burton backing Arabic. Burton considerably modified the Arabic script to voice the numerous nasal sounds in the Sindhi language. By and large, both Hindu and Muslim communities adopted the Burton's language and settled down to render text books and create literature. The new Sindhi language posed a great challenge to the enterprising writers. But they rose to the occasion and won laurels. Five class writers- prose masters – Kauromal Khilnani, Mirza. Qaleech Beg, Dayaram Gidumal, Parmanand Mewaram and Berumal Meherchand burnt midnight lamps and churned out enormous literature in a short span of 75 years. They brought the language to zenith to be fairly comparable with any other modern Indian language. Extant abundance of Sufi poetry was a feather in the cap of Sindhi literature. The modern poet Kishinchand 'Bewas' gave new direction to new simple poetry for a commom man. His works included patriotic, reformist and children's poetry. After partition, minuscule Sindhi-Hindu community spread all over the world gradually lost its touch with the language. In spite of the language in the eighth schedule and the State helping nascent writers both at the Centre and State levels, there is absolute no readership. Long ago- most of the Sindhi medium schools, Sindhi publishers, printers and book sellers downed their shutters. The modern trends, practices and globalisation forced the Sindhi community to go in for English lock, stock and barrel. There are few takers for cable Sindhi programmes and SIndhi plays. No doubt, it would remain a spoken language thanks to the courageous steps taken by the educationists, the musicians, the social reformers and the Sindhi saints. The only alternative is to preserve old cultural values and traditions. Senior Sindhi writers, however, maintain that the Sindhi is a liaison medium with Sindhi brothers in Pakistan.

Religious Beliefs of Sindhis

What was the religion of inhabitants of Mohen-Jo-Daro – the ruins of 2500 BC Indus civilization? Pioneer of excavation Rakhaldas Bannerjee declared that certain terracotta figures resembled *'Pashupati'* (god Shiva) as seen in the temples of Nepal and Himachal Pradesh.

God Shiva *(Mahesh)* mythological god among other two, Brahma and Vishnu is an ageless god. Even Lord Krishna and Lord Rama worshipped Him in His temple. In India twelve *Jyotrilingas* and fifty *Shaktipithas* are built in the memory of Lord Shiva.

Mohamed-Bin-Cossim, the earliest Arab invader and his soldiers destroyed many Buddha and Shiva temples in Debal (Sindh) and en route other holy places. Sindh was probably under the Islamic rule for a longest period. The Hindu pilgrimage and and shrines were descrated and destroyed with immunity. Until 1843, the year of commencement of British rule, almost all the Hindu holy shrines vanished. However, the Hindus in minuscule number survived. They developed a unique tradition of honouring their regional/local saints or *fakirs* – be Hindu or Muslim. During the 16th century the Sikhism flourished in Punjab. From time to time the successive Sikh gurus sent their preachers to Sindh. The Sindhi Hindus having no god idols or pictures and in absence of temples commenced worshipping *Guru Granth Sahib*. However, due to multiplicity of godmen-regional or otherwise the minority Sindhi Hindus were divided and subdivided in adopting their faiths and masters.

During partition of the country in 1947, the Sindhi Hindus anticipating mass killing and forcible conversion to Islam in Pakistan, migrated posthaste to India.

About 30 lakhs migrants Sindhi Hindus had faith in score of sects, shrines with their Gurus and godmen. The saints or heads of Sindhi religious shrines, *Darbars* also migrated lock, stock and barrel and set up their temples, *tikannas*, gurudwaras wherever they got chance in India, albeit, the nearest cities to them were Ulhasnagar, Ajmer and Mumbai.

Miraculously the Masters secured the same following as it was in Sindh. Our Sindhi godmen have been treated as omnipotent by their devotees. Their blessings were sought after, as pure sign of fulfillment of wishes.

After partition, the Sindhi Hindus far from uniting under one banner, allowed the boats of their faiths to drift in different directions. Strangely, some of their rituals and faiths clashed and contradicted with one another on the subjects like idol worship, Guru adoption, consumption

of non-vegetarian food, ancient rituals and time-honoured traditions.

A bewildered number of Sindhi religious sects and institutions, with presiding (deities) gurus proffering own brand of teachings, with own publications have caused confusion to the divisive community running helter skelter. May be, in own Sindhi family, every member would have adopted different guru and the family is divided ideologically.

The most common orders to which divided Sindhis are affiliated are : Sanatan Dharma, Arya Samaj, Adi Guru Sangat, Brahmo Samaj, Radhaswami Satsang, Brahmakumaris and Vaswani Mission.

1. *Sanatan Dharma* : is the earliest rituals and dogmatic Hindu religion whereby million idol worship is universal and the blind following of Vedas is common. When Adi Shankara a young Kerala Sanyasi set out from Kanchi 1200 years ago to propagate the Sanatan Dharma, he aimed at unifying Hindu religion with preaching of the basic principles. He established four sacred shrines (Mutts) in the four corners of imaginative Akhand Bharat : Shringeri, Dwarka, Badrinath and Jagannath. Heads were called Shankar Acharyas, Unfortunately, nowadays, the heads of these Mutts are embroiled in unholy politics.

Similar rivalries are common among Hindus of the different sects. In pre-partition Sindh, there were probably more than 200 saints and *Pirs* and the Sindhi Hindus believed in more than dozen sects who espoused diametrically different faiths.

2. *Arya Samaj* : Blind faith in the Hindu ritualism and superstitions coupled with idol worship (million gods) created doubts in young Shiva devotee Mulji in Tankara Gujarat village about 160 years ago. On one holy *Mahashivratri* day he observed fast and faithfully waited in village Shiva temple to glance at the *Shiv Shakti* (cosmic energy). Instead, he painfully noted that the fruit offerings to *Shiva* idol were scavenged and pillaged by dirty rats and as such no miracle happened to stop this desecration. Disappointed, young Mulji at the age of 13 set out to mountains, woods and rivers in search of the truth. He met one erudite and learned blind Swami Varjanand who trained him in *Vedas* and Yoga education. He removed all his spiritual and temporal doubts. Taking divine order from his Master, Mulji now known as Swami Dayanand Saraswati set out on Hindu reformation mission i.e. he spoke with the robust facts and figures and appropriate *slokas* against blind ritualism, idol worship, superstitions, casteism, illiteracy, female backwardness and dowry. He advocated modern education, body building, reconversion of stray Hindus back to Hinduism with honour called *'Shudhi'*. He described

Swami Dayanand

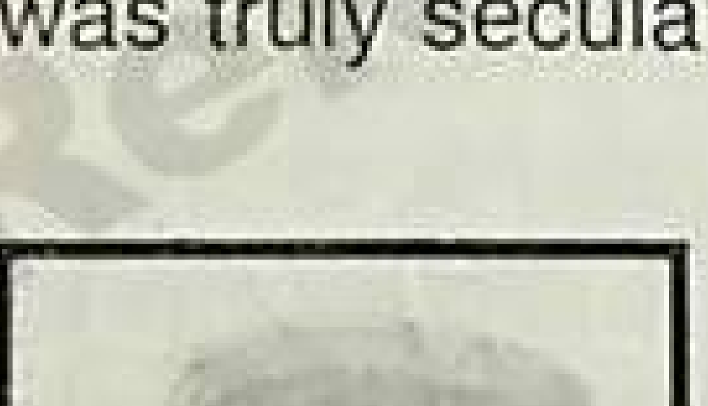
positively the glorious teachings of *Vedas* and tried to prove their superiority.

In the 19th Century he was the first Hindu reformist who popularized Hindi language, admitting non Hindus to Hindu fold, setting up modern educational institutions on the lines of convent schools, establishing body building gyms. for young Hindus and the forest universities *(Gurukul)*. To carry out his missioinary ideal, he established Arya Samaj in 1875 in Bombay. It underscores the principle that the God is in everybody's heart, as, it is, worshipper to realise Him without mediators. There is no God incarnate, no guru required. Rama and Krishna were not Gods but devotees of God. We can respect their memory but should not worship them in the place of God. Further, offerings given for the propitiation of the dead ancestors are useless. The real *pitri-yajna* is the service of the living parents. He thundered that the robust body, strong mind, honest living and upholding the true values of Vedas are the tenets of true religion.

The proselytism practised by the allien religions alarmed elite Hindus in Sindh. They wholeheartedly supported and welcomed the Arya Samaj in Sindh for the protection of the Hindus.

3. Adi Guru Sangat : Almost all Sindhi religious orders with the traditions of crowning the successor, worship and rever Adi Granth. Before his death, the 10th Guru Gobind Singh pronounced the end of the line od succession of gurus and declared henceforth, the function of the guru, as teacher and final authority, for faith and conduct was vested in the scriptures – "Granth Sahib."

4. Brahmo Samaj : Raja Rammohan Roy (born in 1722 in Bengal) was truly secular man having studied the basic tenets of Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity rejecting everything connected with dogma, ritual and idol worship. He is supposed to have imbibed the understanding spirit of these religions. He founded the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta. His main disciples Keshub Chunder Sen and Sindhi scholar Sadhu Hiranand and Navalrai of Hyderabad were impressed. The latter two brothers established Brahmo Samaj in Sindh. The followers of Brahmo Samaj trust in one god and believe in power of sincere prayers. For them it is not necessary that one should follow a particular religion. This sect doesn't encourage godmen and godwomen, for it believes that god is shapeless spirit. Brahmo Samaj teaches clean and honest living without dogmas,


Raja Rammohan Rai

superstitions and casteism. However, this sect did not get much following in Sindhi community as the idol worship, powerful preachings of saints and prevailing superstitions had a considerable hold on the community. The educated class, rejecting bigotry, idol worship and hero worship appreciated the broad and catholic principles of Brahmo Samaj.

5. *Brahmakumaris :* The Brahmakumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya, Mount Abu, owes its origin to 'OM Mandali', Hyderabad Sindh, founded by Dada Lekhraj in 1937. Initially its object was that of character building. It also offered solace, shelter and guidance to the distressed Hindu women. It recommended the practice of Raj Yoga and meditation to control and overcome five human weaknesses. Raj Yoga would usher in an immense happiness, it is claimed. Through its dedicated volunteers called *Brahmakumaris* (and also *Brahmakumars*), it spreads purity, peace, happiness and spiritual awakening. Its founder Dada Lekhraj is addressed as *Pita Sri Prajapita Brahma*. The idol worship is discouraged. *'OM-shiva'* is its symbol. The institution recommends control of carnal or sex desires for the ultimate divine pleasure. It has about 4000 centres all over the world. UNESCO has recognized the importance of this institution in spreading the universal peace. An impressive number of Sindhi women have joined regular spiritual classes conducted by the institution's volunteers. Lately, Brahmakumaris are adopting the neglected hospitals and gardens.

6. *Mira Mission :* In 1933 a scholar and seer T. L. Vaswani founded Mira Mission in Hyderabad. The main aim of the mission was to spread secular and moral education. He renewed the teachings of Sufi saints and ancient Hindu scriptures. Clean and honest living with service and charitable disposition are the basic tenets of this mission. After his death in1966, Shri Jashan Vaswani succeeded, who vowed to tread the footsteps of his Master. The collections of saintly articles of Sadhu T. L. Waswani are bound in *'Nuri Granth'*. His *samadhi* in Pune is being worshipped by his disciples. Most of the educated Sindhis in India and NRIs have appreciated the secular and broad principles of this mission. The spread of spiritual and liberal education, the service of poor and downtrodden, the healthcare of underprivileged and preaching of positive living are its welknown tenets.

7. *Radhaswami Satsang, Beas :* About 160 years ago, the lamp of *Radhaswami* sect was lighted by Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Agra (1818-1878). He was popularly known as "Huzur Swamiji Maharaj".

The spiritual meaning of Radhaswami is "the Lord of soul." Radha allegorically means the devotee seeking the company of his Master i.e. *Swami.* The ultimate union is the goal of every truth seeker. This sect enlightens us that in spite of the diversity of principles, ritualism, customs and the ways of prayers, the spiritual basis of all the religions is same : eternal love, truth, mercy, forgiveness, sacrifice and character. The preachers of this sect persuasively offer *Naam* or *Guru Mantra* to that devotee who is a pure vegetarian, lives by honest means, and his day to day life is unpolluted by any vice. His devoted disciple Baba Jaimal Singh settled at the spot near Beas in 1891 which became famous as *Dera Baba Jaimal Singh.* The founders of this sect explained that the Radhaswami Satsang was dedicated to the science of inner development under the guidance of spiritual teacher. They clarified that for a common man, it is difficult to fathom reasons for rise or fall. Hence god sends perfect guides in the shape of masters or Gurus to the earth. In their highest and noblest state of mind they are able to gift divine mantras to the disciples to overcome agonies and direct them to tread on the true path. Its guru or Maharaj-ji admits the potential devotees to its fold by offering secret *Guru Mantra* or *Nama.* Non-vegetarians or alcoholics are not admitted. The *Guruvani* of Sikh religion is regularly recited. Attendance of regular *satsang* by a devotee is a must. However, guru – cult is in vogue in spite of prohibition by Guru Gobindsingh.

Huzur Swamiji Maharaj

The Sindhi Hindus also worship Satya Sai Baba, Shirdi Sai Baba, Swami Chimanayand. Some of the senior citizens have pious links with *Pirs* and *Murshids* in Pakistan *Dargahs.*

The outstanding contribution of the Indus Civilization
The divine Vedas

Veda means to know. The Vedas, or Shruti (heard) are considered as revealing knowledge having divine, non-human origin अपुरुषय and eternal नित्य. The wise sages (Rishis) received the hyms through their intuitive power called Mantras on the bank of river Sindhu about 3000BC. Symbolically this represented in the form of Lord Dakshinamurti seated under a banyan tree imparting divine knowledge *(Gyan Mudra)* to four sages Sanaka, Sanandan. Sanaatana and Sanat Kumar. Together, the Vedas cover all aspects of human pursuit - ethical values, physical security and pleasurable experience and ultimate goal : *Dharma, Artha, Kaama* and *Moksha.* Well memorised, this knowledge was later compiled together by Sage Vyasa into Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samveda and Atharveda - imparted through chanting. These chants have been preserved our thousand years perfect with meter, notwithstanding, the depredation and pillage of Sanskrit literature by the successive invaders.

History of Journalism in Sindh

In 2000 A.D., Johannes Gutenburg of Germany (1398-1468) was chosen as the man of the millennium for having invented the printing press in 1454. Six centuries after the Gutenburg's invention tremendous progress in mass printing process has revolutionized the communication and knowledge. However, Sindh lagged behind in the field. Bombay was pioneer in the field as the first press was set up there in 1674. 'The Times of India' (then British owned) was published from Bombay in 1838. After the British conquest of Sindh (1843), the British army commander Sir Charles Napier published 'Karachi Advertiser' in 1844, post haste, as he was in hurry to awaken the Sindhis with modernity. The educational department of Bombay Presidency, brought out Sindhi weekly 'Sind Sudar' in 1866 (edited by a Marathi educationist Rai Bahadur Narain Jagatnath Vaidya). A Parsi businessman Pochhaji Dorabji set up a hand composing press in Karachi in 1854 and released bi-weekly English 'Scindian'. Sadhu Hiranand, social reformer, edited an English 'Sind Times' from Hyderabad in 1844. He was particularly concerned about the female education and religious reforms(i.e. Brahmo Samaj) as he was influenced by the reformist renaissance in Bengal.

A monthly informative Sindhi magazine *'Saraswati'* was brought out by Sadhu Hiranand in 1890. For the first time, the stories of Hindu heroes and heroines and epic morals were percolated to common Sindhi man and woman through this magazine .- a vital spiritual literature after a gap nearly 1000 years.

A very entertaining monthly Sindhi magazine 'Jote' published from Hyderabad Sindh (1892) by Parmanand Mewaram(1865-1934) had a very wide circulation. In absence of radio, T.V. and cinema entertainment, the Sindhi literature with diverse subjects and the publications of a number of Sindhi literary and enlightening magazines ushered in literary renaissance. In early 20th century 'Sindhu' (Shikarpur) a monthly magazine published on lines with Calcutta's 'Modern Review' was a sophisticated literary magazine. Whereas Parmanand's 'Jote' was a light reading abounding in moral, funny, animal and educative stories and jokes and it was patronized by the young generation. Parmanand, a converted Catholic, was an English scholar too. He translated English short stories and essays and kept Sindhi readers abreast of modern literature. It was his wont to communicate with

illiterate Sindhi villagers to learn ancient Sindhi 'diction'. The collections of his excellent essays were incorporated in his two best acclaimed books '*Dil Bahar*' and '*Gul Phul*'. For a long time they were prescribed as the text books. His English-Sindhi and Sindhi-English dictionaries are the masterpieces and have been recently re-published by Delhi Sindhi Academy.

Journals during the Freedom Movement : Many Sindhi patriots were fired by the enthusiastic Gandhian Freedom Movement in India. The fast growing educated public needed to be enlightened and awakened. "Hindu" secular Sindhi daily (later 'Hindustan' - on first August 1946) started from Hyderabad in 1916 by Maharaj Lokram Sharma. Another Sindhi daily 'Sansar Samachar' from Karachi (1927) had *Hindutva* – leaning and often glorified the Hindu culture and heritage. Before independence, Karachi had 3 English newspapers "Daily Gazette" (British ownership), Sind Observer" (national), "Karachi Daily" (National-eveninger). Unfortunately due to the new government's harassment after partition and mass Hindu migration, all three papers closed down. '*Al Wahid*' was only single Muslim owned daily, then.

During the British rule, the Sindhi Hindus patronized Sindhi and English education with lightening speed. There were therefore, many monthly weekly publications brought out all over Sindh by Hindus. Floating messages of freedom movement, the national unity, the social reforms and the general knowledge were the main topics of enlightened publishers.

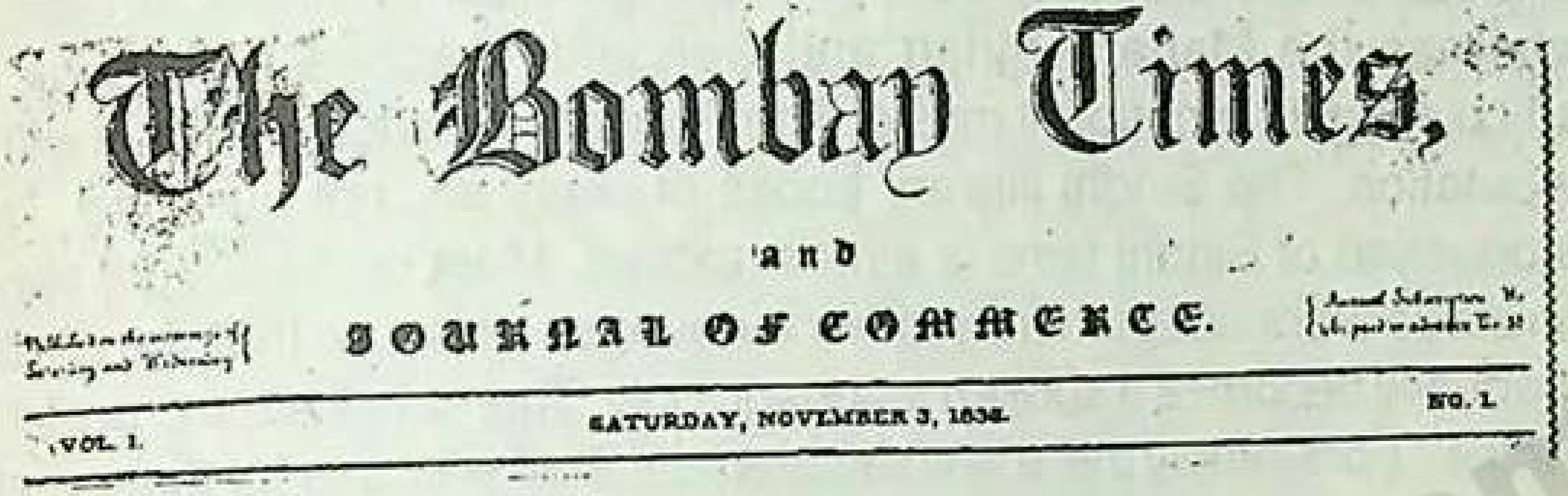
The history of Sindh journalism has immortalized some legendary editors like Hiranand Karamchand, Mansingh and earlier Sadhu Hiranand. All three were principled journalists and reformers. Hiranand was a long time editor of 'Hindustan' (Karachi and Mumbai). He was not only brave and bold nationalist writer, but crusader against dowry – an inherent evil in the Sindhi community. After partition, working as an honorary editor for 'Hindustan' he relentlessly fought for speedy settlement and rehabilitation of Sindhi refugees. Till his death (1976), his noble mission was almost complete. His creation 'Hindustan' wound up recently for want of Sindhi readership, whereas weekly 'Hindvasi' continues to entertain mostly senior citizens.

Early in 1930, 'Gulistan' children's entertaining Sindhi monthly published under the aupicions of *Balkan-Ji-Bari* was the most popular and edited by pious Gandhians. Its editors Parapati Gidwani and Ram Motwani were dedicated nationalists. Soon in 1940, 'Gulphul' a monthly illustrated animal story booklet was brought out by "Sunder Sahitya" – famous literary house.

During the pre partition period the population of Sindhi Hindus were about 25 lakhs – 70% of them were literate. They therefore enthusiastically patronized most of the publications and literature. They carried on this noble tradition to India after migration.

The extensive literary leanings and readership in the Sindhi community stood in its good stead after partition - a nector of survival.

Introduction of Printing in India


The Bombay Times,
and
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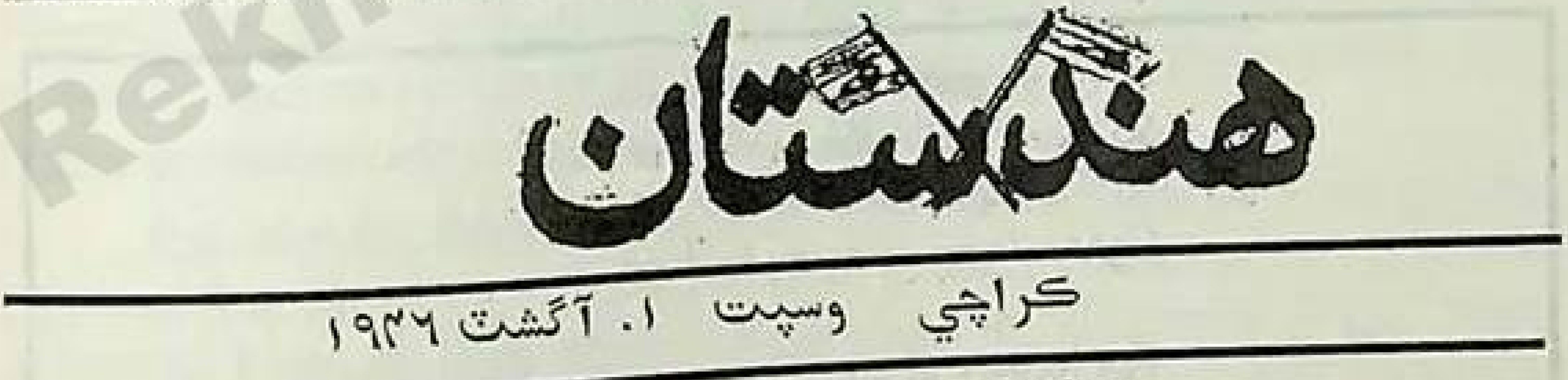
Vol. I. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1838. No. 1.

The Bombay Times and Standard
Vol. XXIII New Series. BOMBAY: TUESDAY, MAY 1, 1860. No. 104

The Times of India.
IN WHICH THE "BOMBAY TIMES," "BOMBAY STANDARD" AND "BOMBAY TELEGRAPH" ARE INCORPORATED.
Vol. XXIV. New Series. BOMBAY: WEDNESDAY, JULY 31, 1861.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Inventors of Modern Printing

Johannes Gutenberg
1398-1468
Invented the printing press in 1454

Ottmar Merganthaler
1398-1468
Invented Linotype

Ottmar Merganthaler
1906-1968
Invented
Dry Photocopy

Dr. An Wang
1920-1990
Invented Word Process

Sindhi Cultural renaissance

In pursuance of economic security as a defence against alien waves and onslaught, the Sindhi community perhaps falls short of literary and cultural standard. By contrast the standard is at the zenith in other communities like Maharashtrians and Bengalis. Our community has hardly and cultural treasure to help create a presentable and admirable folk-lore. The south Indian excelled in classical dance, whereas the Maharashtrian and Bengalis reached high peak in articulating their national music. The Punjabi *`Bhangaras'* have world reputation. The Sindhi literary books of class are not our forte. The production of Sindhi films is almost extinct. Most of the Sindhi plays on stage were adapted from other languages. It is true that the Sindhi gradually becomes a spoken language only. Then what are the unifying forces? Fortunately there is an awareness is all sections for the society to float together. The Sindhi saints and savants are urging their disciples to speak in Sindhi. Sindhi plays, literary seminars folk/religious music and *Bhagats* are slowly becoming popular in India and abroad. Many educational institutions run by the Sindhi management have minority status which helps Sindhi wards to gain admission without hassles. I think, this augurs well for the rejuvenation of our culture and values sans written language. With the patronage of many States, the Sindhi academia have been set up. The new Sindhi writers, educationists and poets are honoured and encouraged. The new awakening begins to show positive results.

So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind,
To this dark world what it needs
Light a lamp and you be kind.

The beauty of the
rainbow is due to the
variety of its colours.
In the same way, we
regard the voices of the
different believers
which rise from all
parts of the earth as a
symphony of praises
on behalf of God who
can only be one.

Sound of Music from across the border

> It is the law of love that rules mankind and yet, the tragedy of it is that the so-called civilized men and nations conduct themselves as if the basis of society was violence
>
> *Mahatma Gandhi*

The sufism was the unifying force in the greater Sindh valley (i.e. Kashmir, Punjab and Sindh). The present illustrious Sindhi sufi singer Abida Parveen says, that was the only sufi belt and all the saints were from that region. Abida's album "Song of the Mystics" sold maximum audio cassettes. It is a sound of Music from across the border. Over last ten years there has been regular exchange of singing and dancing artistes - Mehdi Hassan, Pakistani Gazal king was hotly demanded in India. Lately, an eminent Jagjit Singh, Ghazal singer enthralled packed Karachi houses with his sweet melodies. The local artistes Tina Sahani and Farida Khanam joined him in duet impromptu.

A distinguished Sindhi research scholar late Shri Motiram Ramwani, Pakistani citizen, stayed in Karachi till 1961 and published a masterpiece scholarly epic `Heritage of Sindh' - on the freedom movement, freedom fighters and social transformation in Sindh. Unfortunately few can enjoy this unique book as it is in Sindhi language.

Another noted Pakistani Sindhi scholar and astrologer Shri Ramchand Khatri caretaker of "Brahama Khatri Devi Mandir", Karachi, had to his credit of writing a massive treatise in Sindhi language `Shree Hingulaj Yatra' in 1974. A scholarly book is virtually history of Hindus in Sindh and on Hindu mythology. We salute this noble writer who boldly published Hindu mythology in Pakistan.

It is relieving that after partition no ill-will emerged between Sindhi Hindus and Muslims - notwithstanding the hardships suffered by migrating Hindus. They could not give up the cultural heritage. After the dust settled down, the Sindhi language becomes the bridge of renewing and strengthening the old bonds. Pakistan's distinguished Sindhi genius, scholar and poet Sheikh Ayaz (1923-1997) was an extension of a creative sufi tradition - i.e. secularism and universal brotherhood, Sindhi zealot and the nationalist to the core. He abhorred divisive designs. He was well versed in the works of Gandhiji, Nehru, Togore and often quoted scriptures in his writings. In the late evening of his life, he wrote brilliant poems, stories and articles about the greatness of Indus civilization. When his contemporary Hindu litterateurs began to migrate (in 1947-48) he expressed his anguish :

Don't leave, *bairagi*
Dawn will appear here again
My heart is sinking, support me O, Kind!
If winter comes, can spring be far behind?

Another illustrious son of sindh, nationalist and pioneer of *Jeeye* Sindhi movement in Pakistan, G. M. Sayed was father like figure to the oppressed Sindhi masses who complained the ill treatment was meted out, and injustice done to Sindhis. He repented for his earlier blunder. (He had moved the infamous resolution of the creation of Pakistan in the Sindh assembly in 1946) and confessed partition was a blunder. He repeatedly emphasised that Sindh was a separate `*Desh*' with separate identity and civilization since the time immemorial. This "Jeeye Sindh" movement encompasses preservation and sustenance of Sindhi language, culture and sovereignity without making distinction between Hindus and Muslims. Signifying a common composite culture of the Indus valley, there are vocal Sindhi groups in Pakistan who consider Raja Dahir not Mohammed-bin-Qasim as there national hero.

Pakistan History and Education in correct perspective

The new enlightened scholars in Pakistan are waking up to note with concern the objectionable material in school textbooks and distortions in history books. Till recently there was a great emphasis on the conquests of Mohammed-bin-Qasim and Mohammed Ghaznavi. It is now realised that this kind of education injured the minds of students and obliterated the genuine nationalism. The Pakistan history book hardly underscored the importance of `Mohen Jo Daro' or the freedom movement or the composite culture which blossomed in the Mughal era. Prof. A. H. Nayyar, physicist at the Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad, complains that when young minds are taught myths and false history, they become less inquisitive, and truth becomes a casualty. Having realised the great distortion, the Pakistan plans to amend the school curricula.

Lado

(Sindhi wedding song at female gathering)

Getting a pretty bride, smiles our groom,
She is slim, tall, so smiles our groom,
She is a young and sweet, smiles our groom,
Delighted verily, look wrings body our groom,
Wishes of the mom, fulfilled as the luck willed
Welcome is a lucky dame in Mom's embrace, splendid,
Hiding her moon-face she flickered her smile,
Groom held his breath as he eyed her a while
Holding her soft hand, shivered our groom,
Her sweet silence was ringing in his ears like boom
How long coy smile would begile our simple groom,
Will she obey him, - then-time will tell us soon.

Wedding Bells

As the drums beat and the *shehnai* played on

He vowed her to be his wife,
Amid a symphony of scent and song,
And she chirps "You are my lord, life after life",
"We are now one, to the world but two"
He answers, " that their dreams come true, "
Seated under the banana leaf
The Pundits chant salokas,
Invoking Indra's best blessings,
And thus began one more nuptial tie,
Bound in inviolable unity, mounting joy,
By vows taken and seven rounds,
Before the holy fire, ecstacy with no bounds,
Merry couple not knowing yet,
Bills uncleared, or a crying babe,
Drudgery of dish-washing by the kitchen sink,
Yet her life-long dream,
of turning a new leaf,
At the moment being a bride,
Has become a reality, a sacred belief.

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Choosing a wife

Young man when you choose a wife,
Remember she is your for life,
Choose her not for skin that is white,
It is but skin deep, think a while, right
Know her virtues that will endure,
For her pride and prejudice, there is no
cure,
"Fair, tall, slim," is your demand?
Look elsewhere for everlasting bond.
God has made us what we are,
Society or law will not tolerate colour bar,
What matters is more than dowry, make-up
and view,
Is she humble, kind and tolerant too?

Musical Insutrument of Sindh

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Sindhi Musical Instruments

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is he moved with concord of sweet sounds
Is fit for treason, stratagem and spoils
Let no such man be trusted and remain out of bounds.

The seven basic notes of Indian classical music, it is said, were borrowed from the calls of seven birds. In turn they got them from the rolls of thunder, the whisper of the leaves and the murmur of the river.

The sociologists often quote that when nations attain high level of civilization, they think of luxuries. The refinement of social and cultural life in Sindh as revealed from the excavations of Mohen-Jo-Daro bears testimony to the fact that Sindhi culture was not only ancient but at the same time it was advanced. Few musical instruments found in around the ruins of Sindh lend proof to our conclusion. For example '*borrindo*' instrument is short earthen hollow ball from within having one hole in the middle.

As regards music of Sindh, it was the folk music, and continues to be so by virtue of its beauty, but side by side, the sophisticated class developed its taste for the classical music as well. It was folk music which acted as the only medium of expression and transmission of the sentiments. Folk songs have been essence in themselves as the appeal effectively to emotions in a way in which spoken language or a written word can seldom appeal. A fact deserved to be noted is that most of the Sindhi lyrical music is allegorical – gift of spiritualism. The mundane romance ultimately stirs up love for god – a fundamental lover.

Serenity of Sindh-surroundings has always inspired a normal Sindhi to sweet speech and singing. Clear skies, green grassland, waving crops along the majestically flowing Indus, twitter of the birds, tinkle of bells tied around the necks of the cattle, melodies of the *Hurli* i.e. Pesian wheel have been a source of music to him.

Folk music of Sindh comprises *Gich, Maoluds* (praise songs), *Halar, Hungar, Jamalo, Moro.*

Gich: The traditional Sindhi songs fulfil the twin purpose of folklore and folk music. The theme of the poetry being the birth, betrothal, marriage, expression of the aspiration of parents and their invocation to god for the long and prosperous life of the new born and the new couple etc.

Maolud : *Maoluds* or praise songs constitute devotional music in the praise of Master (guru or god).

Halar : It is sung while the corn is thrashed by the bullock. In jubilant mood the farmer sings the *halar* verse as the bullock does its job.

Hungar: The Cowboys (*Gwals*) of Sindh used the pied pipers to call back their grazing cattle home.

Jamalo : Jamalo is a very popular female folk song sung in chorus to the rhythm created by the clapping of hands apart from musical instruments e.g. *Dholak*. Its composition is very simple and intelligible.

In the Sumura period there occurred number folk romances i.e. *Mumal-rano, Lila-Chanesar, Umar-Marui* etc. The romances were themselves revealed in poetry which sought the medium of sweet voice (music) as the vehicle of expression of affection, sorrow and separation. The singing of these lyrical songs has been a tradition carried forward in Sindh since centuries. The war ballad of *Dodo Chanesar* has been favourite of Single folks Minstrels of different tribes such as *Bhans, Bhats, Chaarans* and *Maganhars* sang the songs artistically with the indigenous musical instruments : *Surundo* being the most prominent among them.

The Sufi poet of Sindh, Shah Abdul Latif did the job of a sociologist. He studied human nature and human society of Sindh and deemed it fit to narrate the account of romance, piety and patriotism in his *Risalo* immortalizing the history and culture of Sindh through the medium of his verses, because where "prose fails, poetry prevails". He has enumerated the Sindhi musical instruments in vogue in his time and in the preceding period. They are *Murli, Nar, Kinro, Sarod, Rabab, Tambur, Khamach* and *Khartal*.

Shah's Music :

The *Dastans* (Chapters) of *Shah-Jo-Risalo* bear the names of *Raags* (melodies), are illustrative of his knowledge of music and its association with his poetry. He had indeed portrayed that one could be elevated to the plane of imagination while listening to music which possesses ecstatic effect on account of both the depth of meaning and the style of singing. Shah Abdul Latif reoriented the style of music. His verses could be sung in both *Desi* as well as in classical *raags* (melodies). The names of *Raags* (melodies) of his *Dastans* are generally in keeping with their theme. Any accomplished musician could depict the picture of the substance of the verses in the specified *raag* (melody). The notes of *Kohiyari, Suhni, Kamod, Samundi, Ramkali* etc. convey their background through the melodies.

Among many sufi songs, the *Kafi* of Sachal Sarmast was considered melodius and lyrical.

The main Sindhi musical instruments are :

1. *Wada* : Like flute, it is long bamboo hollow instrument with ten holes – both mouth blow and intricate finger play render the required sound.

2. *Surando* : it is five-string ancient instrument. For low and high pitch expert hand is required.

3. *Naghara* : it resembles Hindu temple *Naghara*.

4. Sindhi *Murli* is a double pipe blowing instrument.

5. *Sharnai* : is a crude form of Indian *Shehnai*. Mostly played on wedding occasions.

6. *Duhul* : is Dholak of Sindh.

7. *Yaktaro* : is single string instrument.

8. *Khartal* : A single hand operated wooden instrument. Most of the Hindu saints used it while singing *Bhakti* songs.

9. *Chang* : is ancient mouth organ. In folk story Rai Dyach – Beejal, the musician Beejal is supposed to have played *chang* to please the king.

10. *Pava* or *Benoon* : is flute type hollow instrument. To be used together at one and same time.

11. *Danboora* : is mini – Indian *tamboora*.

12. Sindhi *Gharro* : is a fully blown earthern water jar. Both hands play on the surface of the empty jar. Most of *Bhagats* (including Prof. Ram Punjwani) extensively used *gharro* in sufi *chowkis*.

A long period of Islamic rule over Sindh and absence of any temple town, there were hardly any trace of Hindu music instruments like *Veena, Nadswara, Sitar, Shankha*. Instead, the Arabic instruments and tunes which were also found in Spain (Spain was ruled by Arab *Moors* in 10th century) were noticed in Sindh. Sindh didn't produce great musicians like Swami Haridas, Tansen, Tyagraja. Nevertheless its simple music was for a common man to enjoy. Master Chandur specializing in earthy love songs had natural flowing voice interlaced with lyrical quotations with lyrical quotations. He had a large following in the countryside.

Prof. Ram Panjwani was a unifying force through the medium of Sindhi *sufi* music. Bhagat Kawar Ram had pristine voice which enchanted the village folks nearly 40 years. Master Chandur, Vocal folk singer regaled illiterate country folks on the open fields with immortal romantic tales in musical rhythm.

The Sindhi music with its countryside ancient instruments withstood the stormy times and contributed to the community's unity.

A hundred suns may rise and blaze,
Four scores-Four moons and shine,
I vow without beloved mine,
I am in darkest night.

Shah Latif

Dwell in my eyes beloved fair,
That I can close them now,
No one may ever see you there,
Nor I see else at all.

Sachal

My Master demands, O devotee
Nothing except love and heart
Says Sami, ignore doubt and debate
Of all sort

Sami

Go collapse at the door of your Master,
Your body is His, surrender your head
Give up your ownership, you live while the world is dead
Dharamadas says, salvation comes to your aid

Dharamdas

They read and read but what they read
Their hearts refuse to store
The more they pages turn, the more
are deeply steeped in sin.

Shah Latif

If you have learnt to long, by pain,
be not stressed -
Secret of love's sorrow must be
never confessed
Suffering is by heart caressed
and there, it is preserved

Shah Latif

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If one has done bad deeds,
of wickedness,
But afterwards repents and
mends his way,
Resolving not to do such
any more,
But practise reverently all
that is good -
He, in the long run, will be sure to gain
Good fortune, and will change calamity
Into sweet blessing through
the lessons learnt.

Guru Nanak

Passover it - the world is bridge.
Build no house on it for a one,
day you will be under pressure,
it collapses and hit a ridge,

Sami

Reading to a man devoid of wisdom
is like mirror to blind

Sami

Man's many desires are like,
the small metal coins he
carries about in his pocket
The more he has, the more they weigh him down

Anon-Sufi

When we are at rest,
the demons rejoice,
But when we are at work
the angels enjoy

Anon-Sufi

MOVEMENT OF MOMENT

Moments those which were so sweet,
But always they don't repeat,
Moments which make us laugh and smile
But they are for a while.

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ماستر چندر جو ڪلام

Master Chander's Kalaam

My Merciful Lord

That, he fulfilled my wishes,
It's kindness of my Lord,
Who else will care
Of downtrodden with a handsome reward?
Cruel and harsh is as
The world our around
In the web of cheats
Many simple folks are found,
It's my kind Lord, He would
Lead us to the site,
where, from pains and punches
I get some respite
He is a skipper and a capable guide
of our rudderless, broken boat,
He would lead us safe,
To the ultimate life's port
He is the king of Kings,
with huge army and wealth,
unknown, he cleared our debts,
Thus enlarged our faith.

(Translation by the author)

اللھ عاشقن جا ڪم پاڻ ڪري
مولا مستن جا ڪم پاڻ ڪري
نہ تہ ڪير نماڻن تي نظر ڌري
١. دنيا رنگ زماني مان ڇا ڄاڻن،
ھو موج الستي ۾ ماڻن
غم ڪڏھن نہ ڪن خوش دل ٿا رھن
دنيا جي جھنجھٽ کان ڀڄن پري
٢. آھ موج درياھ ۾ بہ ساڻ ملاح
وچ سير ۾ ساٿي آھ اللھ
ڪندو تن کي ڇا طوفان ڀلا
تڪ تار مان جن جن ڪشتي تري
٣. بن پئسي بي پرواھ آھن.
بنا فوج خزاني جي شاھ آھن
ھڪ توڪل ساڻ اللھ آھن
جن جون چندر چنيون رھبر تو پري

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How Sindh Cotton Cloth Covered the world

Sir John Marshall, the first director of Archaelogical Dept. of British India noted in "Mohen-Jo-Daro and Indus Civilization" that the earliest cotton cultivation started in Sindh and the inhabitants of Mohen-Jo-Daro had mastered the technique of making cotton cloth. He adds further that this art was adapted by the Egyptians 2000 years later.

The enterprising and pioneering Sindhi merchants, therefore, were exporting Sindh cotton cloth to the middle east and Europe till 1700 AD. via `Patal' Sindhu delta port.

The Sindh cloth became so popular that the old Babylonians named it as "Sindh". The British traders were horrified at the flood of the imported Sindh cloth. The nascent Lancashire textile workshops made a war-cry and compelled the England Parliament to pass Act (1666) forcing the locals to use woollen cloth even for covering the coffins. This indirect ban had little effect. Thereafter, as a consequence of rudimentary inventions, Lancashire workshops begain to manufacture cotton cloth with imported Indian cotton through East Indian Company. Indirectly, the Sindhi cotton cloth ushered in the "Industrial revolution" in England in 18th century.

100 years later, a long staple cotton grown in Sindh with the help of Sukkur barrage irrigation (1932) was widely used by the newly established cotton textile mills in Gujarat and Mumbai. Even Mahatma Gandhi recommended Sindhi cotton for the quality khadi garments.

In Tharparkar folk-story of "Umar Marui", the imprisoned heroine Marui prefers rough cotton shawl to the imperial silken garments.

"Threads Maru round wrists tied are old,

yet, fine gold they are for me;

Umar, don't offer silks to rustic

maid, they leave me cold

Because much dearer I do hold

my worn cotton shawl."

Masterpiece couplets of the eminent Sindhi poet Sheikh Ayaz - sketches by M. H. Channo, Shikarpur Pakistan

Translations by the author, Jawahar T. Bathija

I am after you, O *Aari* Prince,
I will reach you fast,
To surrender at your feet,
let the desert be vast,
Cover me in your arms,
you are for me, the first and the last.

آري! واري جندڙي، پهچَس پهچَس جاڻُ،
گهوريان تنهنجي ٿوهرَ تان، پنهون پنهنجو پاڻُ،
تون ته سدا مون ساڻُ، سڀجهي لوڪ اڪيلڙي. – اياز

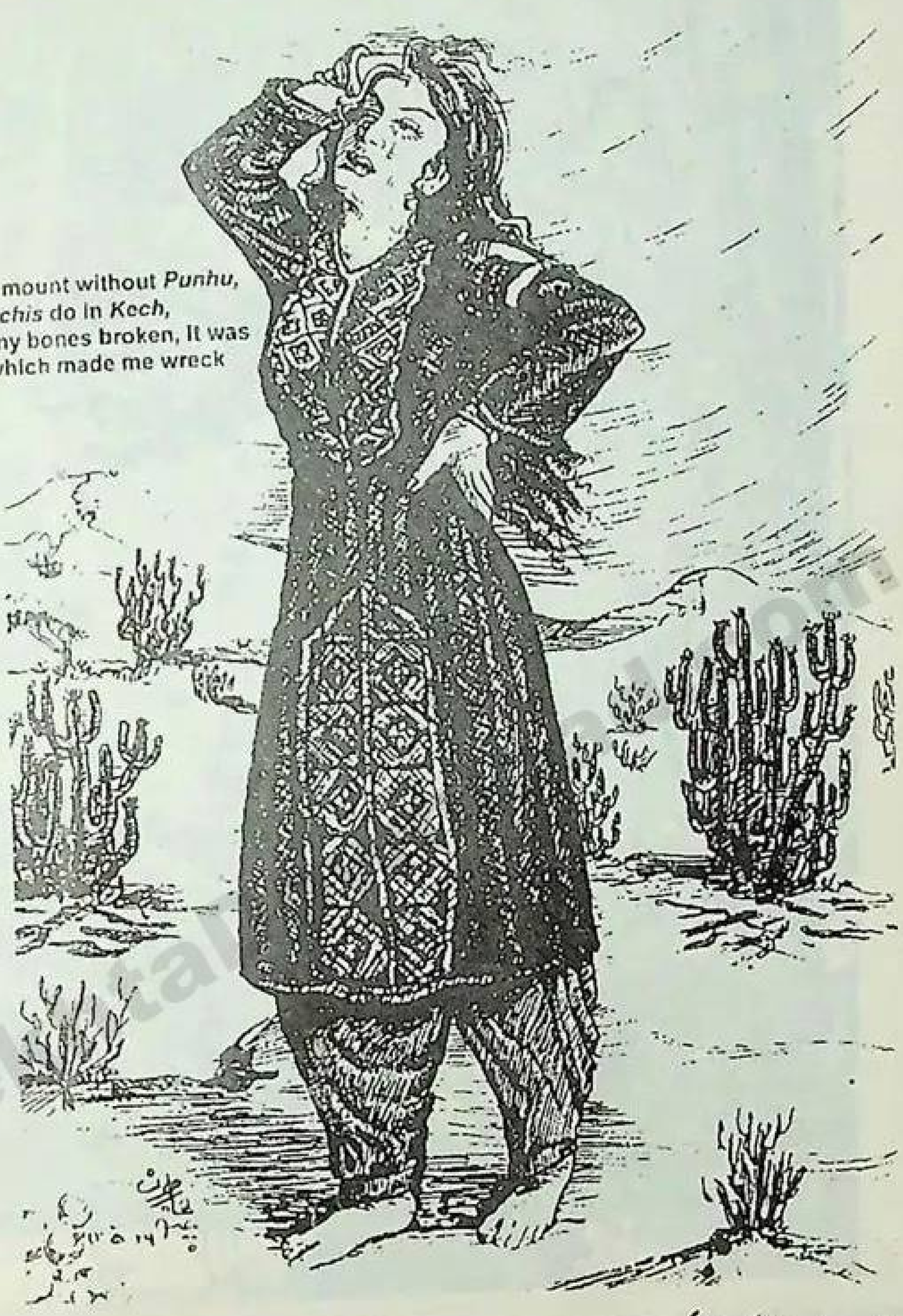
A string of bow struck a thrilling note
which relieved me of painful chains,
Fools thought, I was prisoner of mind
though I was free as a bird, I sense.

اَڄ جو نِڪتي تَندُ مان، تَرِڦي ڪاڻِ تانَ ،
مُون تان وَيون ميڻجي، زنجيرون زندانَ ،
سَمجهن ٿا نادانَ، باندي مون کي بند مِ !
١٠١

Yellow flowers filled my lap,
when I wore rosy dress,
Fragrance of spring then
cheered up my dear race.

ونئين ڳاڙهو ويس، پيلا گل پلاند ۾،
ڍڪيو سارو ديس، آئي بوءِ بسنت جي.
اياز

Trudging mount without *Punhu*,
is like *Kechis* do in *Kech*,
Though my bones broken, It was
destiny which made me wreck

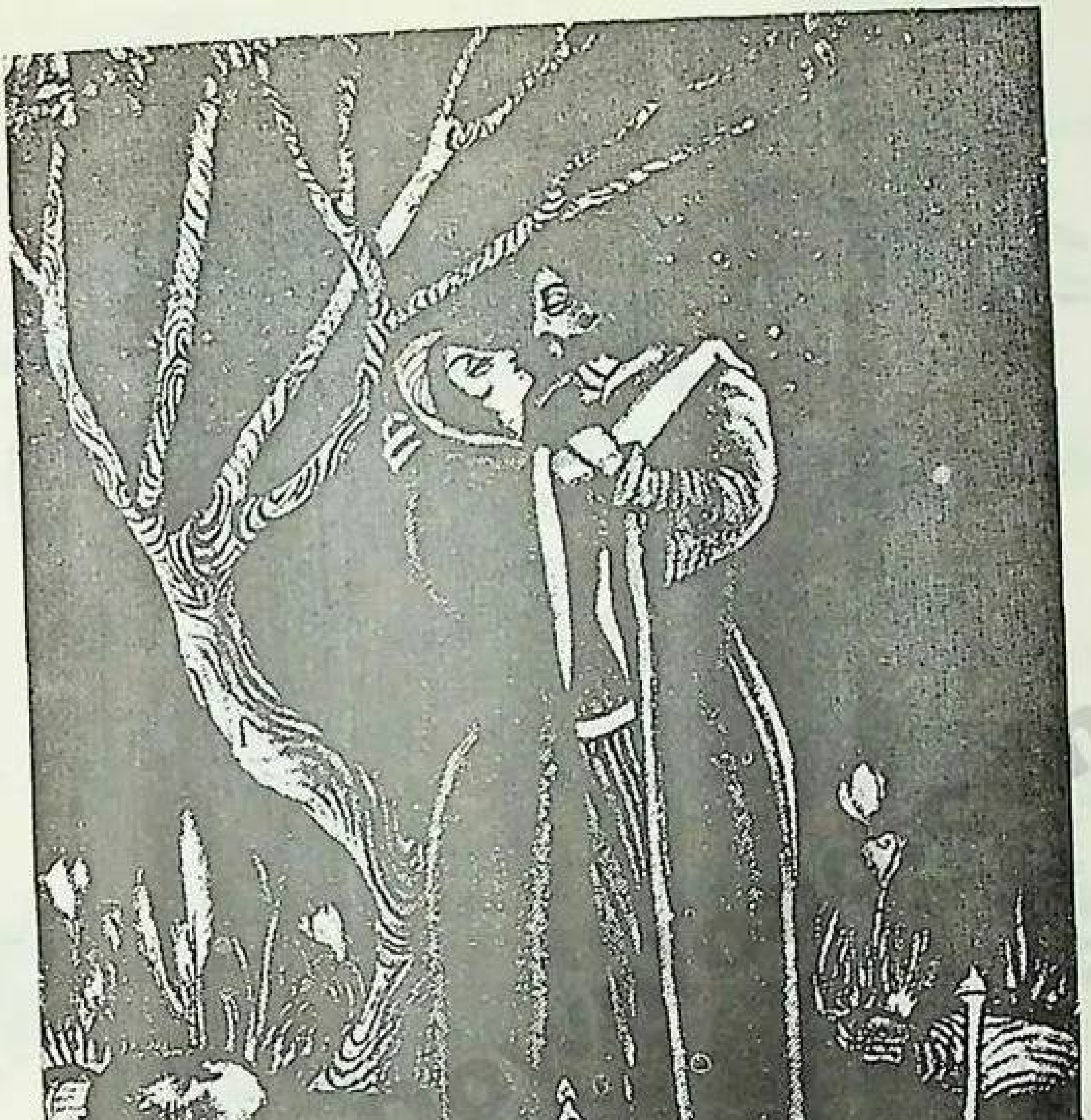


پُنهونءَ بنا پَنڌَ، ڪيچي ڪيچين وانگيان!
سي مون ساڻا سَنڌَ، آري ڄِن اَمرُ ڪيو -

اياز

Ignore gossip *Sasui*, path is desolate,
Women will taunt, you aim at the union,
Blinding storm hurts, see but,
sun does not set.

لوڪ ڪياتي ٻوڪ، سسئي وڃ نه سُڻي مَ
ڇا پر گهلي لوڪ، ڪهڙو آري آسرو
اياز



It is a beautiful world,
squeeze few minutes of love,
Stars twinkle, though dark is the night,
A short while we love,
equals hundred years above

وهَجي لوَنءَ لَڙاٽَ مِ ، سونهن پَريو سنسارُ ؛
ٽِمڪِن ٽِمڪِن ڏيئڙا ، سارو ڪارو نيارُ ؛
پَلَ لَئہ مَا لِڪُوءِ پيارُ ، اَمرتا اوڏو ٿيو - اياز

Punhu, my honour, don't leave me in the lurch,
Stony alleys bleeding my feet,
Blinding storm, hurting heat,
How can I stride?
Then in your winding, weary search?

پُنهون! مُنهنجي پَتِ، اڪيلي ڇڏيئه سيج ۾؛
مُنهنجا پير پٿون ميانا، لهوءَ لَتِ پَتِ؛
اَنڌا ڌُند اُتَتِ، اڳتي پَنڌُ نه اُجهي.

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Review

Glimpses - Sindhu Civilization Revisited

(Second Edition)

- Author Jawahar T. Bathija

The above titled book is a revised and enlarged edition of author's "Gilmpses of Sindhu Civilization". published in April 2004.

This small book is throwing light on the cultural, social, historical, literary and religious aspects of the Sindhu or Indus valley. Sindhi Hindus who migrated from the west Pakistan after partition in 1947 spread not only over India but strayed abroad. Among the loss of their ancestral property and established avocations, their Sindhi language was a great casualty. During the pre-partition time, Their mother tongue Sindhi was a binding force. The data on most of the cultural, religious and social mores, customs and rituals was enshrined in the Sindhi books. The ancient Sindhi poetry, Sufi Kalaam, Folk stories and texts were all in Sindhi. After migration from Pakistan the new generation opted for the convent type English medium education - the reasons being elevated status, economic ascendancy and the global exposure. Then Sindhi medium education had no takers. Gradually Sindhi medium schools closed down and Sindhi publications remained suspended. There arose a need to fill up the gap. The diversified Sindhi community was required to be enlightened on its foresaken rich heritage in the simple and lucid English language. Shri Jawahar Bathija's second edition encompasses most of the aspects of cultural and historical heritage of Indus valley. Mini chapters and short poems are refreshingly moral, educative and lively.

The author intends to spread the message of *Sindhiyat* to the communiity through well researched book "Glimpses

- Sindhu Civilization Revisited"- Notwithstanding lamenting the loss of own language it is noted that, this highly informative and enlightening book would bestow an indentity to the Sindhi reader.

The selection of contents is wise and planned. Six folk stories portraying allegorical divine love, ode to the Sindhu river, description of sages and sufis, the light on sufism, a breezy reference to Sindhi festivals and rituals and illustrated couplets are among many sparkling glimpses. The language is lucid and lyrical. The revised new edition adds six new chapters i.e. Religious beliefs of Sindhis, History of Sindh Journalism, Miracle or Mythology, Chachnama (ancient record), Music of Sindh and the Sun temple of Multan. This book can be termed as a mini reference book on the history of Indus civilization.

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Glimpses of Sindhu Civilization.
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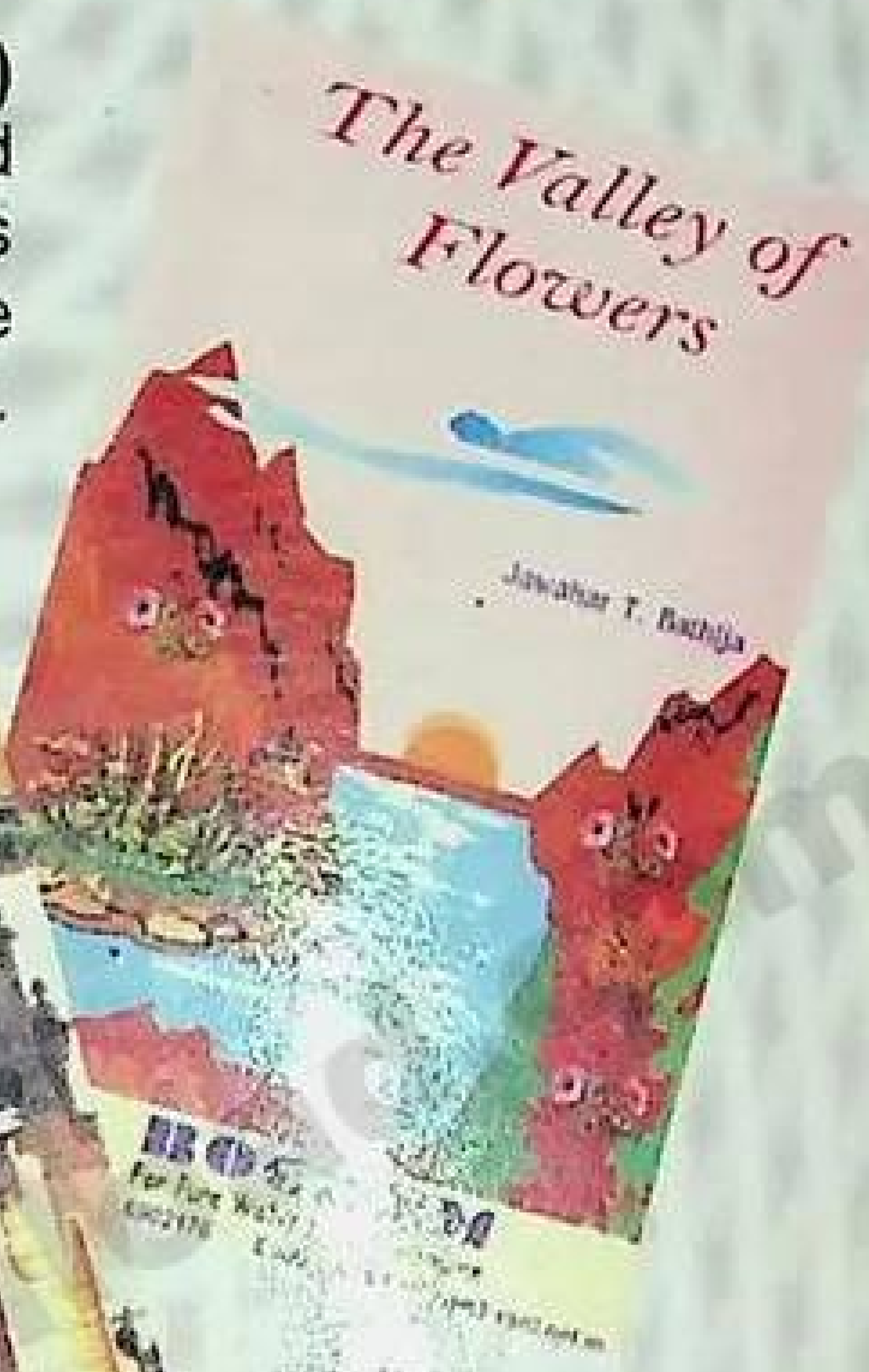
Gleanings from the author's two English books
(AUTHOR JAWAHAR T. BATHIJA)

'The Valley of Flowers' (2001) is a collection of entertaining and instructive anecdotes and parables which offer a message of positive and balanced living.



'Glimpses of Sindhu Civilization' (2004),is a many **Splendoured** treasurehouse of Indus valley civilization, containing the immortal Sindhi folk stories, the epic poems, the essence of sufism, the glory of Guru Granth, Sanskrit, the great Masters and Seers of Sindh and the peep into the Hindu festivals and rituals. Both the books are in lucid and beautiful English. Both books were well received by the scholars, the students and the indologists. **'The Glimpses of Sindhu Civilization'** precisely is the rich description of ancient Sindhi heritage and culture and would refresh the memory of the glorious past. This new edition is enlarged and revised made fabulously entertaining and informative